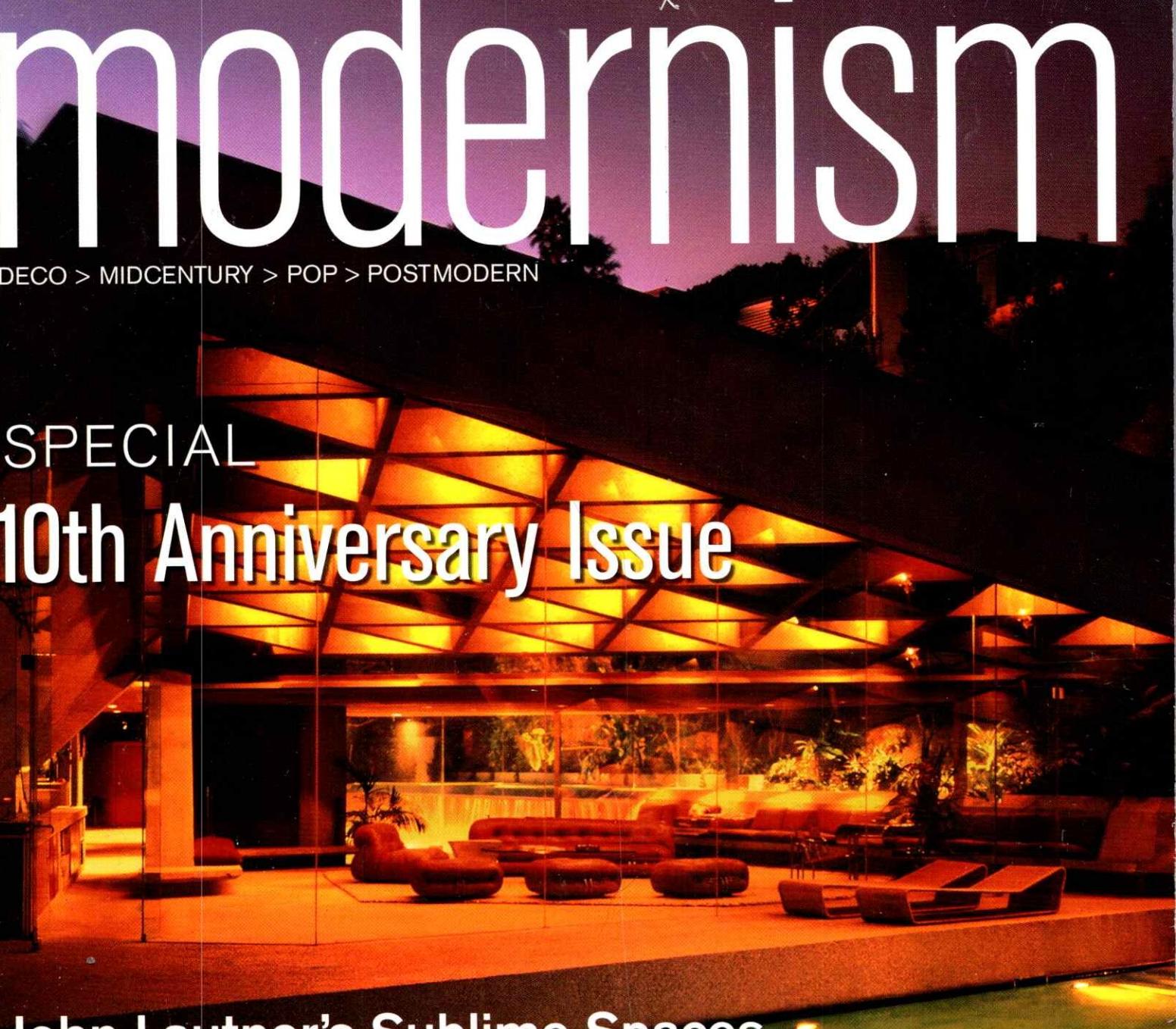


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Josef Frank and Swedish Modern

Designing the Silver Screen

The House Collector

Dessau's Bauhaus Legacy

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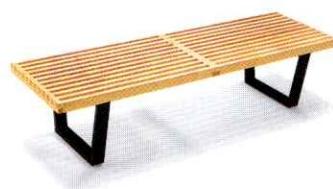
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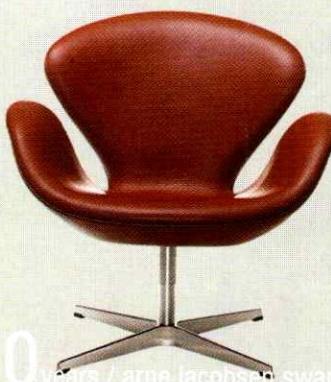


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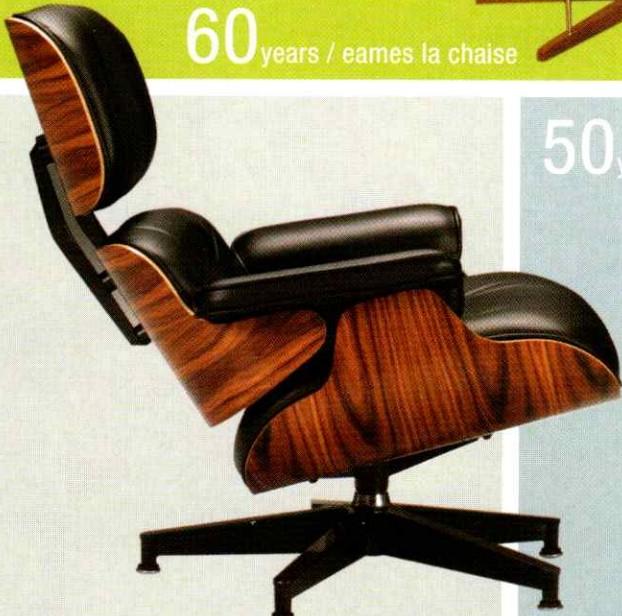
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60 years / eames la chaise



50 years / arne jacobsen swan chair



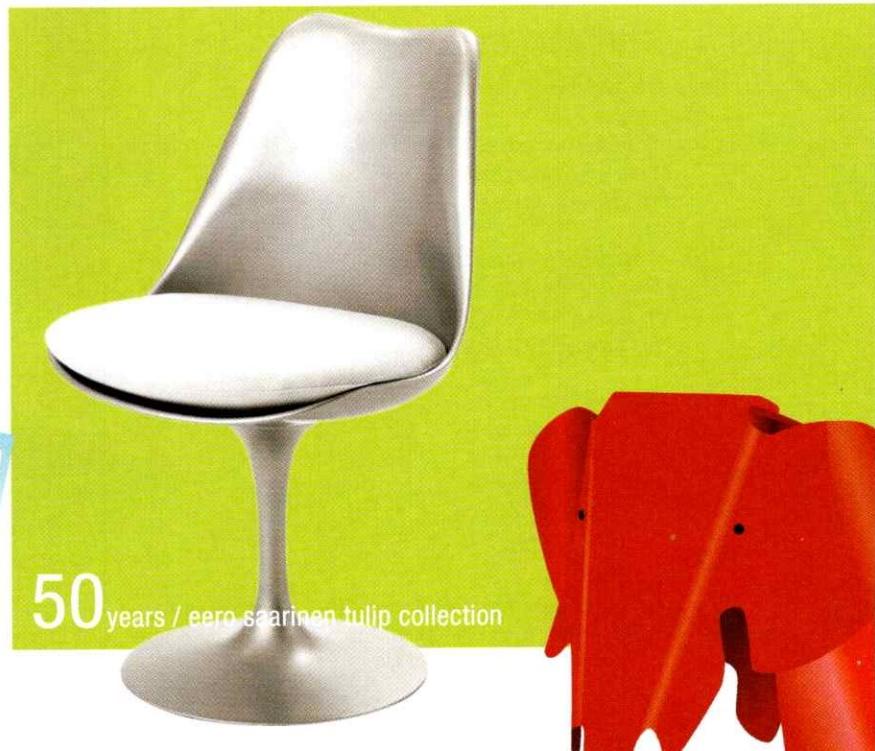
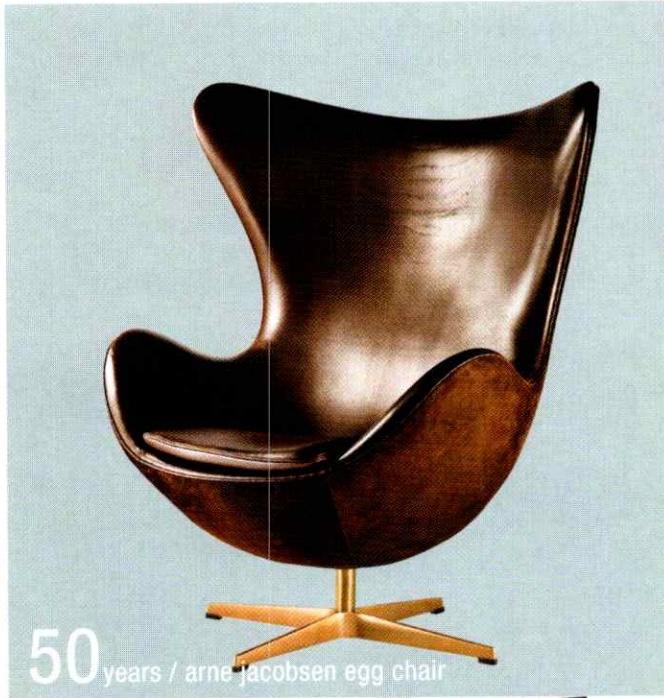
50 years / eames lounge chair & ottoman



50 years
arne jacobsen seven chair



■ Jules Seltzer Associates

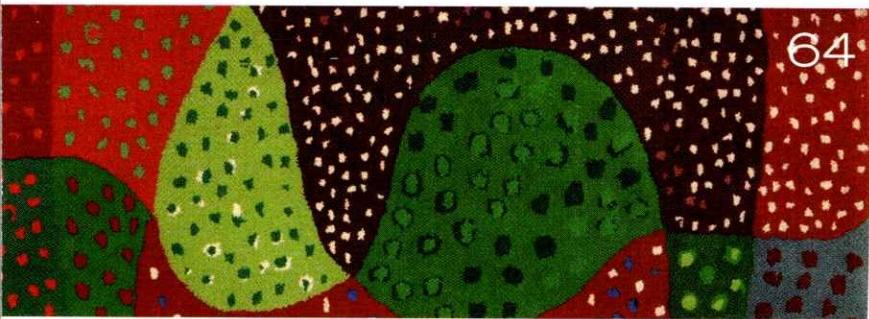


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Spring 2008

Volume 11, Number 1



FEATURES

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Dissolving the Confines

For this most idiosyncratic of architects, successful structures drew their inhabitants into communion with the natural world.

By Nicholas Olsberg

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Making Swedish Modern

Frank's relaxed, accessible style convinced millions to embrace modernism.

By Christopher Long

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Many Americans first encountered modernism at the movies — and it sometimes beat the real thing.

By Sandy McLendon

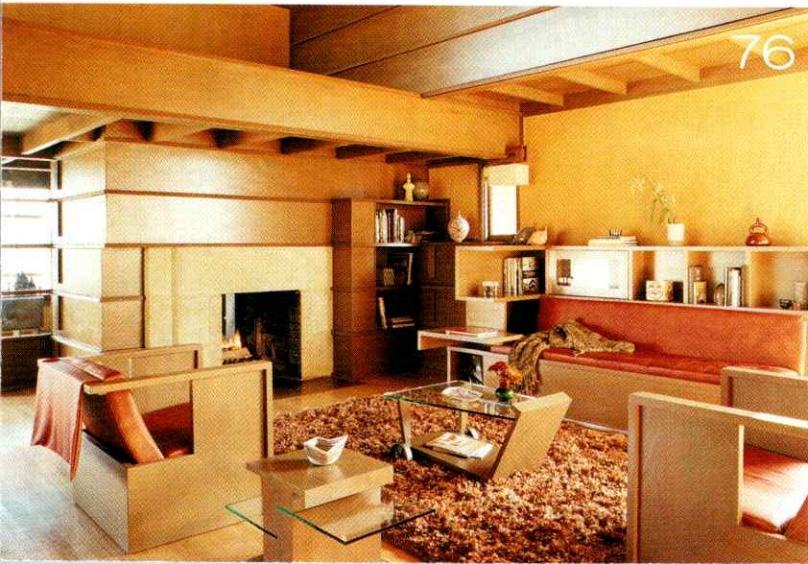
76 Spaces

The House Collector

Putting his money where his heart is, Michael LaFetra gathers modernist homes, before someone else can tear them down.

Text and photography by Tim Street-Porter

On the cover John Lautner, Sheats-Goldstein House (1963/1989), in Los Angeles. Photo by Tim Street-Porter.



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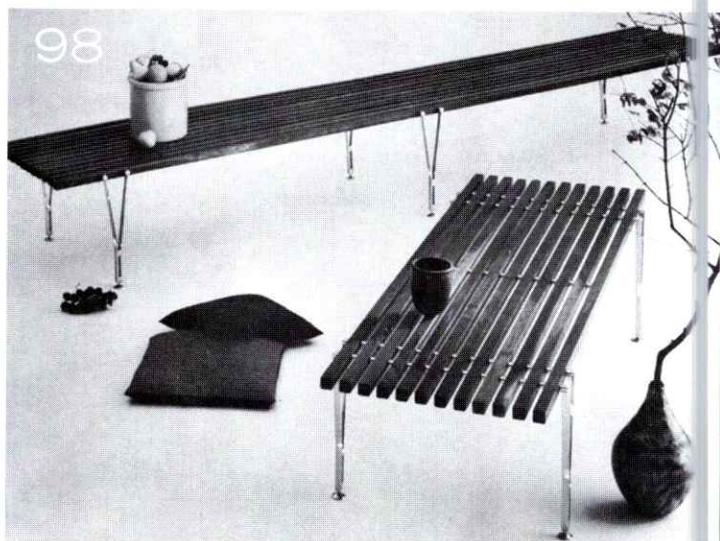
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By Kate Fogarty



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SHAG

The Birds and the Beasts



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Perth - March 28 - April 13 • Breadbox Gallery, 233 James Street, Northbridge WA 6003

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EDITOR'S WORD



In 1998, David Rago got the idea that collectors might want to learn more about the 20th-century designers who were drawing increasing interest at his auctions in Lambertville, New Jersey. Together with a colleague, he founded *Modernism*. In the ten years since, enthusiasm for modernism has soared, with collectors, dealers, curators and designers probing ever more widely and deeply into the ideas and products of the movement. In that time, *Modernism*, too, has explored the seemingly endless variety of modernist design, bringing the most compelling discoveries to our readers, whether in architecture, industrial design, graphic design or the decorative arts. As we move into our second decade, we remain committed to presenting everything from the iconic to the unknown, from the earliest production of the last century to the movement's most recent iterations.

To mark our 10th anniversary, we are pleased to announce our first online edition, available for this introductory issue at no charge to our readers. (For details, see page 42.) Contingent upon reader response, we will produce an online version of each issue in an effort to increase accessibility and offer value-added features, as well as to reduce our environmental impact: readers could choose to receive the online edition only. And rather than making feel-good changes, such as simply switching to recycled paper (which can actually increase carbon emissions through transportation to a distant printing plant, for example), we have decided to undertake an analysis of our entire production process, from materials to printing to shipping, to see how we can make our operations greener. Stay tuned for updates on our progress.

This issue's cover story sheds new light on the powerful, organic architecture of John Lautner, who refused to be cowed by prevailing orthodoxies. We also consider two routes by which modernism seduced the public around the world. One was Swedish Modern, an informal, approachable version originated by Viennese designer Josef Frank. The other was Hollywood, which made modernism, from Art Deco to Mies, as glamorous as the stars themselves. Our profile of Hugh Acton reminds us that modernism is far from ancient history; at 82, he is once again assembling, by hand, his famous *Suspended Beam Bench* and working on new designs. City Report takes us to the origins of it all — the Bauhaus in Dessau, Germany — and to an unexpected center of Art Deco architecture: Shanghai, China. We also look at why modernism is still with us, its high points of the past decade and where it's headed.

We would like to thank you, our loyal readers and advertisers, for your support and feedback over the past 10 years. We hope that you enjoy this special issue and we look forward to many more to come.

-Andrea Truppin



Marianne Brandt

Marianne Brandt
tea filter holder
lacquered steel
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MAILBOX

I enjoyed reading the article about Mariane Strengell ["Structure and Surface," Vol. 10, No. 4]. My aunt, Lilyan Santo (née de Caro), worked with her at Karastan Rug Mills. Lilyan de Caro graduated from Cooper Union in 1924. Through their knowing each other, in the mid 1960s as an aspiring furniture maker living and working in Henniker, New Hampshire, I was introduced to Olav Hammarstrom (Strengell's husband), who was then involved in designing Christ the King Lutheran Church in Nashua, New Hampshire. I ended up making the altar furniture, including a large oak cross that hung over the chancel area. Marianne Strengell designed the colored glass windows in the church; the story was that the church was too poor for traditional stained glass. Other than The Chapel of St. James the Fisherman in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, I do not know much about Hammarstrom's work. It would be interesting to see more of his work in an article. I enjoy *Modernism* and have been a subscriber from the very early days of the magazine.

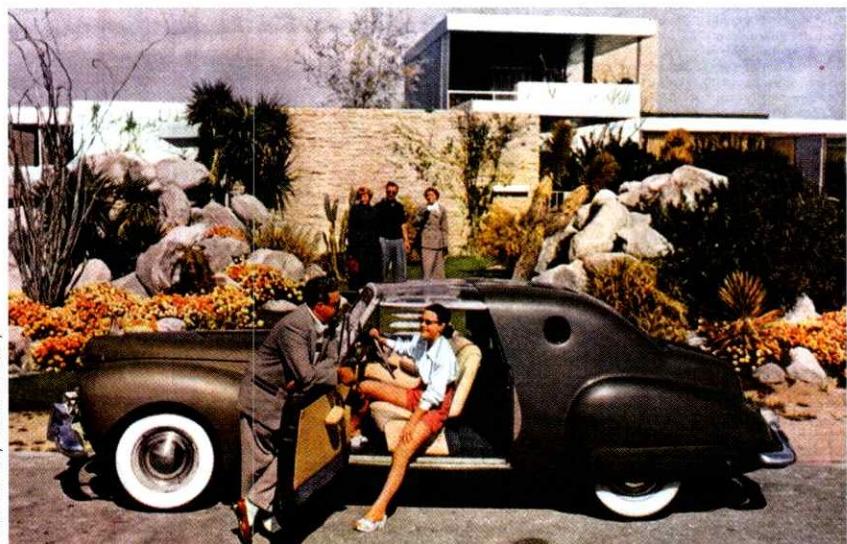
—John McAlevey, Warren, ME

Exploring the work of lesser known designers is very important to us. Thanks for the great suggestion.

Regarding Jake Gorst's recent article, "Designing Raymond Loewy: Elizabeth Reese Remembered" [Vol. 10, No. 4], I disagree with his conclusion. Betty was a close family friend for many years and I knew her well. In Gorst's article he states, "But without her, Loewy's influence might not have been so enormous and our world might look and work very differently." Clearly, as my father's publicist, Reese knew her craft; however she is not responsible for Loewy's design genius and foresight. She packaged the man to the media, but the package was Loewy's own talent, influence and style. By the way, Dad's custom '41 Lincoln Continental Coupe, featured on page 54 of the article, brought \$455,000 at the Gooding & Co. Scottsdale Auction on January 19th, proving that good styling is timeless.

—Laurence Loewy, Marietta, GA

Photo courtesy Laurence Loewy



Above Raymond and Viola Loewy, Laurence Loewy's parents, with their '41 Lincoln Continental Coupe parked in front of Richard Neutra's Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, 1948.

Send letters to the editor to andrea@modernismmagazine.com



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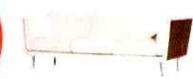
Eames Storage Unit



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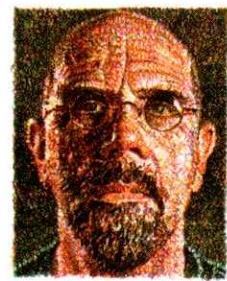
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Thomas Nozkowski, Small Abstract



Chuck Close, Self Portrait 2007

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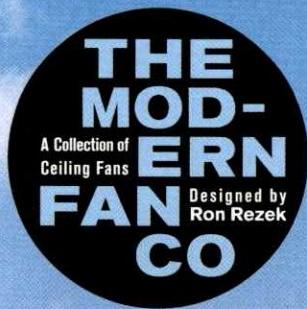
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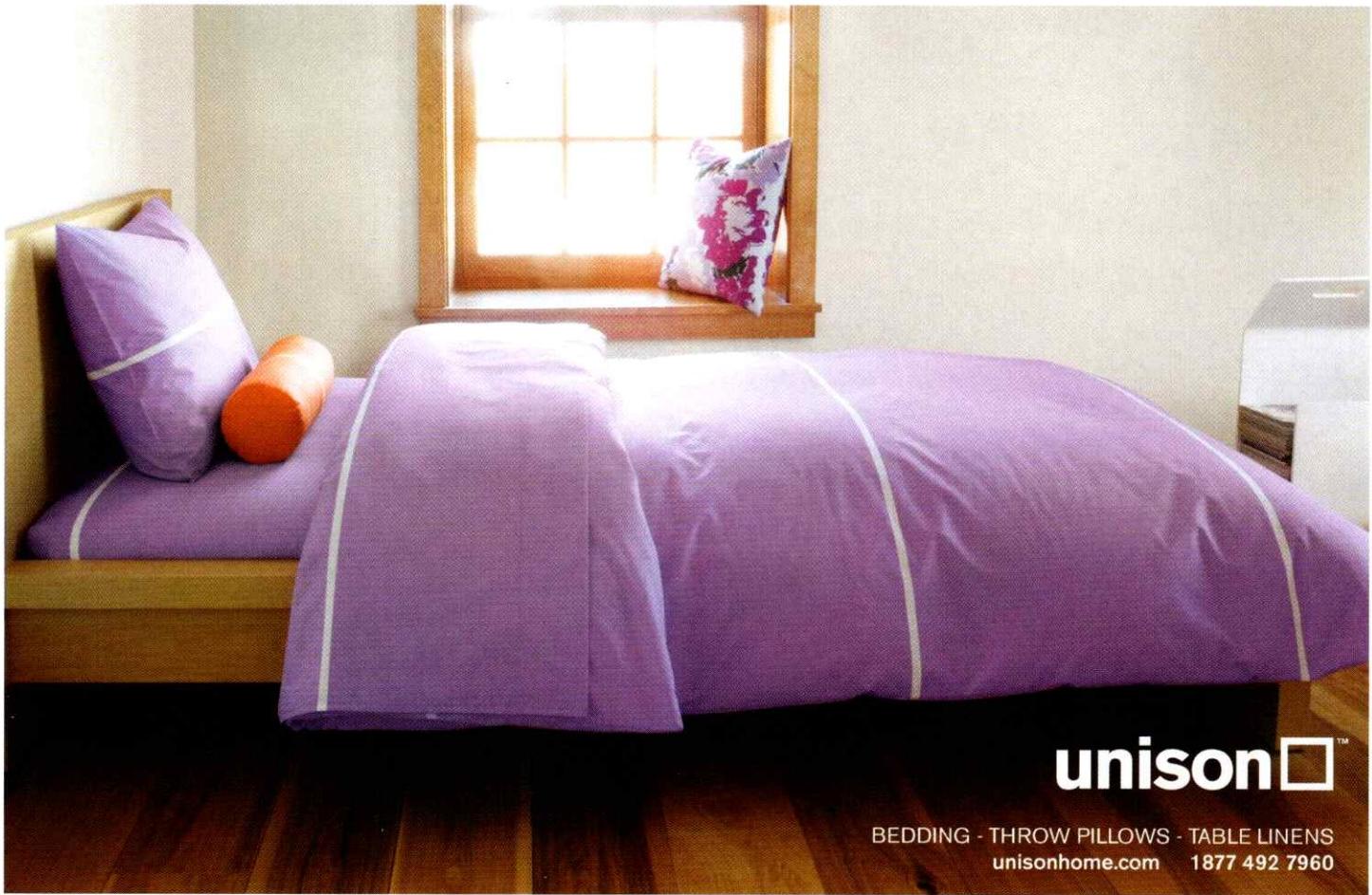
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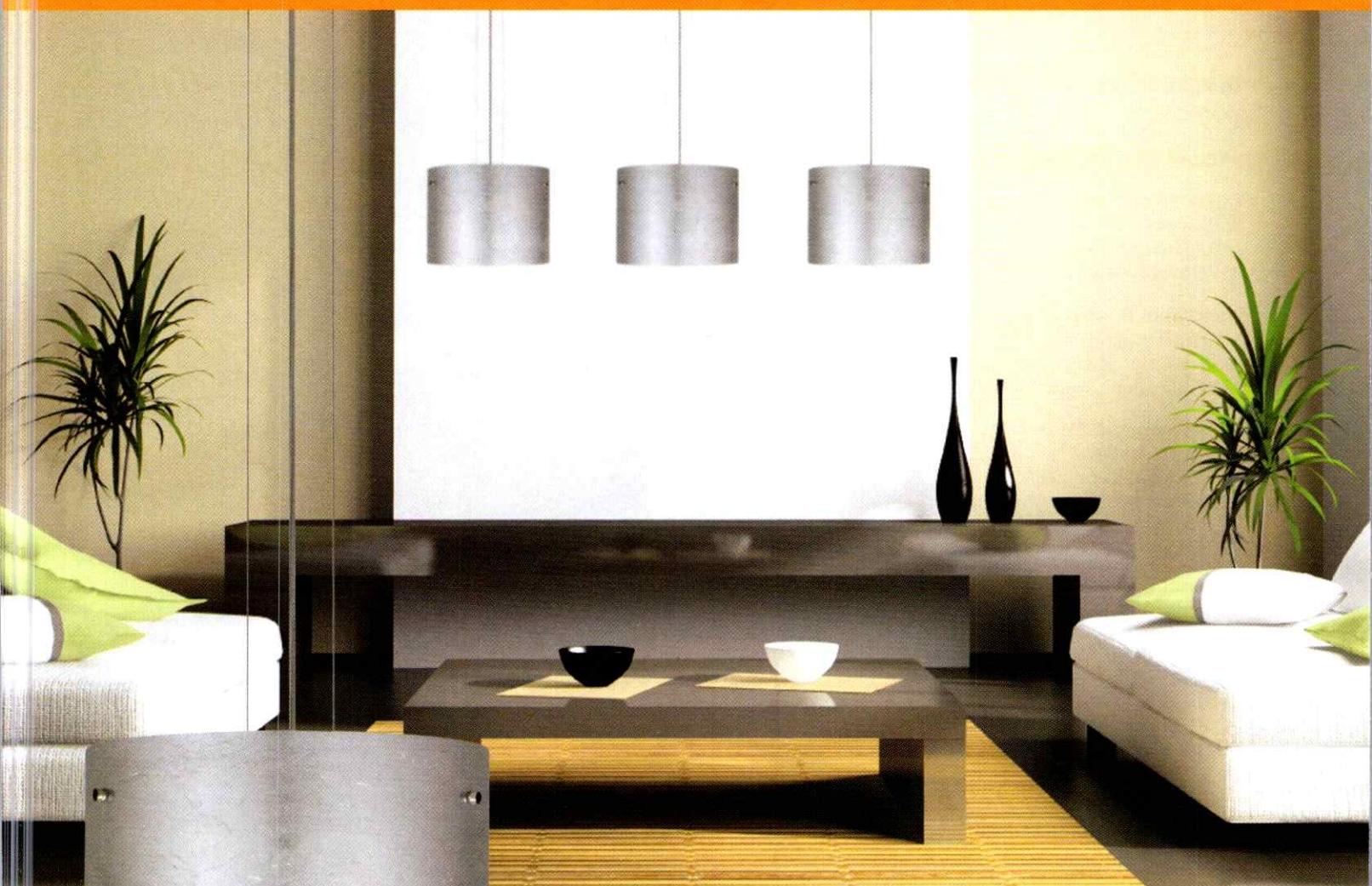
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EAST

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443/573-1700, www.artbma.org

Rhythms of Modern Life: British Prints 1914–1939

Through June 1

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
617/267-9300, www.mfa.org

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March 16 – September 14

American Hungarian Foundation, New Brunswick, NJ
732/846-5777, www.ahfoundation.org

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March 27 – June 30

Neue Galerie, New York, NY
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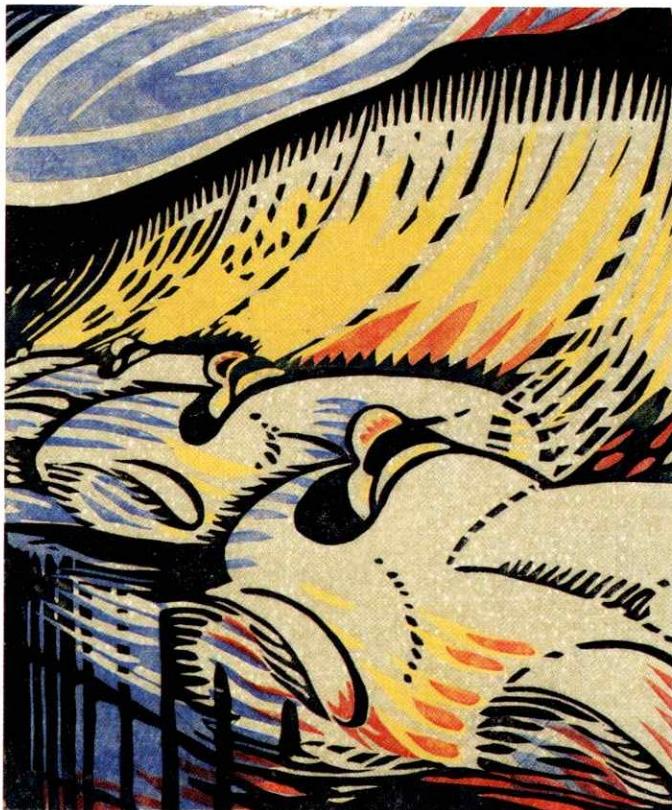
May 7 – September 1

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
212/535-7710, www.metmuseum.org



Courtesy Price Tower Arts Center.

Above Advertisement for Lee L. Woodward Sons, *House and Garden*, April 1952 (detail). At the Price Tower Arts Center, Bartlesville.



Above Sybil Andrews, *Speedway*, 1934. Color linocut.
At the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Johanna and Leslie Garfield Collection, courtesy EB Powen & Osborne Samuel Ltd, London;
Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

MIDWEST

Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future

May 4 – August 23

National Building Museum, Washington, DC
202/272-2448, www.nbm.org

Give It Your Best: Workplace Posters in the United States

April 18 – December 31

Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE
302/658-2400, www.hagley.lib.de.us

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MIDWEST

Setting The Table: Designs in Mid-Century Dinnerware

April 6 – August 3

Price Tower Arts Center, Bartlesville, OK
918/336-4949, www.pricetower.org

American Modernist Jewelry, 1940–1970

May 3 – August 24

Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, IN
260/422-6467, www.fwmoa.org

SOUTH

Designed by Architects: Metalwork from the Margo Grant Walsh Collection

March 15 – August 3

The Scholar's Eye: Contemporary Ceramics from the Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection

May 17 – September 1

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX
713/639-7300, www.mfah.org

The Furniture of Eero Saarinen: Designs for Everyday Living

Through May 5

Museum of Design, Atlanta, GA
404/979-6455, www.museumofdesign.org

Calder Jewelry

Through June 15

Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL
561/832-5196, www.norton.org

WEST

Lessons from Bernard Rudofsky

Through June 8

Bernd and Hilla Becher: Basic Forms

May 6 – September 14

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA
310/440-7330, www.getty.edu

"Lessons" provides a look at the often controversial work of architect, curator, critic, exhibition designer and fashion designer Bernard Rudofsky. "Basic Forms" presents photos of industrial architecture.

Raymond Loewy: Designs for a Consumer Culture

April 19 – September 28

Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT
406/994-DINO, www.museumoftherockies.org

Florence Knoll: Defining Modern

May 8 – June 29

Kirkland Museum, Denver, CO
303/832-8576, www.kirklandmuseum.org

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Selections from the Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies

May 8 – September 7

LACMA, Los Angeles, CA
323/857-6000, www.lacma.org

"Into the Woods," a Fiery Tale

Through May 3

American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA
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Cut: Revealing The Section

Through June 8

SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA
415/357-4000, www.sfmoma.org

An exploration of the architectural section drawing as a design tool.

Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Above Peter Voulkos, *Stack*, 1973. Stoneware.
The Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



© 2007 Calder Foundation, New York.

Above Alexander Calder, Bracelet, c. 1948. Silver wire.
At the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach.

INT'L

Richard Rogers + Architects: From the House to the City

April 24 – August 10

Design Museum, London, UK
+44 870 833 9955, www.designmuseum.org

From Atoms to Patterns: Crystal Structure Designs from the 1951 Festival of Britain

April 24 – August 10

Wellcome Collection, London, UK
+44 20 7611 2222, www.wellcomecollection.org

The Jewelry of Dieter Roth

Through May 11

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France
+33 01 44 55 57 50, www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr

Pierre Paulin: Design at the Top

Through July 27

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Galerie des Gobelins, Paris, France
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Above Dieter Roth, Ring with 18-carat gold band supporting 15 interchangeable screw-on tops in colored Plexiglas, 1971. At the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

Photos by Harry Burst © Collection Hans Lagenbacher.



Alex Maness Photography

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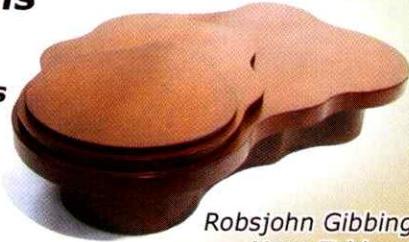
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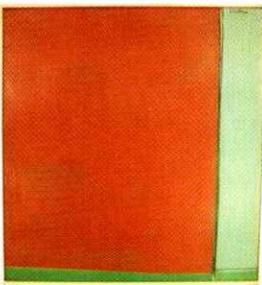
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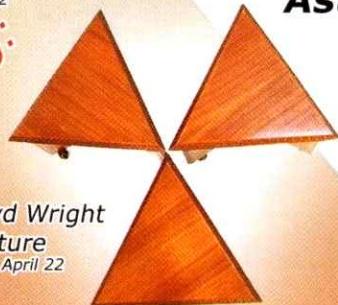


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Design Miami: A Brief Expedition

The limited-edition, rare and prototype furniture snapped up by buyers at the third annual Design Miami, the design showcase that overlaps with Art Basel Miami Beach, included a boomerang-shaped *Belu* bench (2007) by Zaha Hadid and Patrick Schumacher, which RoveProjects LLP sold for \$200,000, and a set of furniture by Oscar Niemeyer, designed between 1972 and 1990, which R 20th Century reportedly sold for \$200,000. Moss Gallery had the highest-priced transactions, with two of five editions of Studio Job's suite of cast bronze furniture, titled *Robber Baron: Tales of Power, Corruption, Art and Industry* (2007), selling for \$1.1 million each.

While acquisitions were on the minds of the serious shoppers among the 20,000 attendees, other visitors were taking in the experiential aspects of the show. Fairgoers could watch Tanya Aguiñiga transforming the most mundane piece of mass-produced furniture imaginable — the folding metal chair — into a cheerfully colored, softer incarnation, coating it with matted wool, soap and water. Nearby, Stuart Haygarth created an eight-foot-high, five-foot-wide chandelier from the bottoms of 1,500 water bottles donated by visitors to the fair. It was positively regal when finished, commanding the center of its light-drenched space, a testament to the glory of refuse morphed into a functional object.

Designer of the Year Tokujin Yoshioka's installation *Tornado*, on the top floor of the adjacent Moore Building, provided a crowning moment after a trek through the show's three floors of furniture offerings. The afternoon sun lent an ethereal glow to undulant mounds of clear plastic straws piled in drifts around a series of Yoshioka's sculptural creations, including several chairs and a crystal sculpture enthroned on pedestals. The Artek pavilion, dubbed "Space of Silence," was another luminous



Photo by Red Eye Productions.

assemblage. Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, known for an ecologically friendly approach, filled the long chamber with 100 playfully stacked, gracefully aged Alvar Aalto chairs that Artek has reclaimed from flea markets, schools, homes for the aged and garages.

Libby Sellers, a former curator at London's Design Museum, brought Grandmateria to the Loft Building, a segment of the fair that offered visitors on-the-spot interactions with emerging British talent. There was a pop-up tattoo parlor, furniture being made from soap, quirky shelves being crafted from felled trees and giant light fixtures that designer Haygarth was assembling from the taillights of industrial vehicles.

Whether the focus was acquiring, exploring or simply admiring exemplary design, the converging elements at Design Miami touched on all points.

—Saxon Henry

Top Studio Job's cast bronze *Robber Baron: Tales of Power, Corruption, Art and Industry* (2007), at the Moss Gallery space.

Below left A paper chair by Designer of the Year Tokujin Yoshioka, surrounded by banks of plastic straws, formed part of his installation *Tornado* on the top floor of the Moore Building.

Below right Stuart Haygarth's chandelier made from the bottoms of 1,500 empty water bottles donated by visitors during the fair.

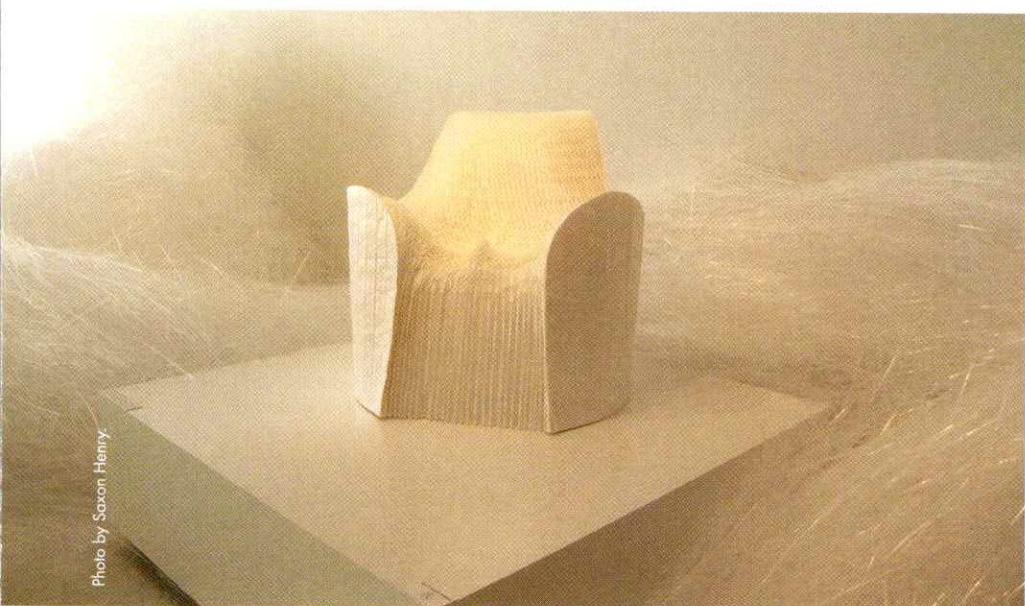


Photo by Saxon Henry.



Photo by Saxon Henry.

Italian Design on Display

Surprising as it may sound, Italy has never had a museum dedicated to Italian design. That changed recently with the opening of Milan's Triennale Design Museum last December. Designed by Michele de Lucchi and Italo Rota, it is housed in renovated portions of the 1933 Palazzo dell'Arte, which it shares with the Triennale di Milano art museum. The design museum is on the second floor, while downstairs is a design library, archives and documentation center. The museum's inaugural installation, "Obsessions of Italian Design" (through April 2009), is a collaboration between Rota and filmmaker Peter Greenaway. It places 100 20th-century Italian design objects by Ettore Sottsass, Vico Magistretti, Gaetano Pesce and others within the context of Italian culture and history by displaying them with projected films by Greenaway and six contemporary Italian film directors. "This museum aims to show that the history of design is in many ways independent

of, and an alternative to, that of art and architecture," says architect Andrea Branzi, the museum's scientific director. "Because of its unique nature...related to everyday life, it provides precious cultural and anthropological information for understanding the history of our country." For more information visit www.triennale.it. —Stephanie Bakal



Photo courtesy the Triennale Design Museum.

Above Exhibition design by Peter Greenaway and Italo Rota, Triennale Design Museum.

REAL MODERN: Pull up a Chair

We often get inquiries from readers seeking modernist furniture and accessories that fit today's spaces, lifestyles and budgets — especially smaller apartments and condominiums.

In the early 1950s, Danish designer Hans Olsen (1919–92) anticipated the shrinkage of living spaces, creating one of his most sought-after designs: a round teak dining table and chairs that took up no more space than the table top itself. The table's apron had cut-outs sized to admit the top rail of each chair's back; the three-legged chairs' seats were triangular, fitting beneath the table like wedges of a pie. Now discontinued by its manufacturer, Frem Røjle, the design has become highly sought-after, commanding anywhere from \$1,500 to several times that amount, depending on condition.

For the budget-minded, two alternatives exist. Sears, Roebuck made a line-for-line copy that was featured in the 1967 Spring and Summer catalogues; it can

be instantly distinguished from the original by its wood-grained Formica table top and elm wood framing. Examples don't turn up often enough to determine pricing, but this version should cost far less than Olsen's original. The most accessible variation is at IKEA. Designer Sandra Kragnert has riffed on Olsen's idea by putting chairs with shaped backs at each gently curved corner of a rectangular table to create the *Fusion* dining set in ash veneer and chrome, with an Arne Jacobsen feeling (\$299, www.ikea.com). —Sandy McLendon



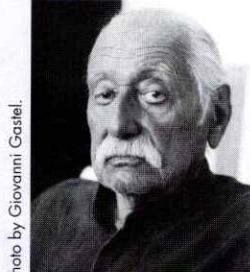
Photo courtesy IKEA.



Metro Retro Furniture, Pasadena, TX

Left Hans Olsen's classic space-saving table and chairs for Frem Røjle (near left) served as inspiration for IKEA's new *Fusion* dining set in ash veneer, whose chairs fit at the table's rounded corners.

Ettore Sottsass 1917–2007



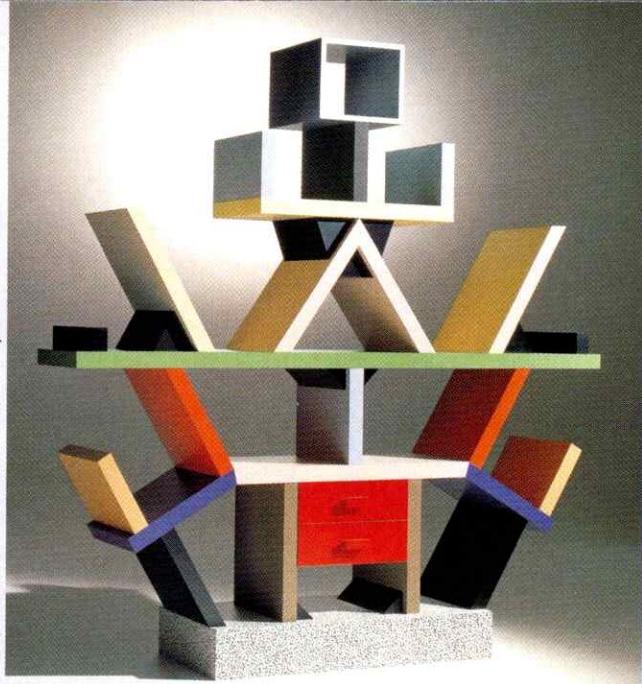
Ettore Sottsass, 2007

Iconoclast designer Ettore Sottsass died in Milan on December 31, 2007, at the age of 90. Sottsass pioneered the use of emotionally appealing colors and ergonomics that transformed industrial products into must-have consumer friendly objects. When his bright red portable *Valentine* typewriter, created for Olivetti (with British designer Perry King), hit the stores on February 14, 1969, it became an instant Pop icon and helped push Italy to the forefront of contemporary design. With the popular success of Memphis, the design collective he co-founded in 1980, Sottsass became the face of international postmodernism; his exuberantly colored and patterned furniture, ceramics, tableware and glassware poked fun at the sobriety and rigidity of Bauhaus modernism with playful, illogical shapes and references to mythology. In his quest to imbue the objects of daily life with meaning, he questioned every standard approach. "A table may need four legs to function," he once said, "but no one can tell me that the four legs have to look the same."

Born in Innsbruck, Austria, Sottsass received his architecture degree from Turin Polytechnic in 1939. An amateur painter, he was also inspired by Matisse, Picasso, Braque and Kandinsky, as well as the Surrealists, who awakened his life-long attraction to vivid color and organic forms. Given the bleak economic scene in postwar Italy, Sottsass, like many of his peers, turned from architecture to design. He opened his first studio in Milan in 1947.

In 1957, Olivetti took a chance on Sottsass when the company hired him to design for its new electronics division. His first project was to redesign the *Elea 9003* (1959), Italy's first commercially produced mainframe computer. Hailed for its innovative color-coding and ease of use, the design won Italy's prestigious *Compasso d'Oro* award for outstanding industrial design.

During the '50s, Sottsass began receiving commissions from Raymor, the New York distributor of modern home furnishings, and spent a short time in designer George Nelson's studio. He also took the position of art director for the fledgling Italian furniture



The Carlton room divider, 1981. Made by Memphis. Wood, plastic laminate.

Above Carlton room divider, 1981. Made by Memphis. Wood, plastic laminate.

company Poltronova, for which he would later go on to design some of his best known furniture, such as the colorful *Superbox* cabinets (1968). He also developed a philosophy of "anti-design," and a belief that mainstream design can truly be transformed only by an outsider.

In the early 1980s, Sottsass co-founded the renegade Memphis design collective to produce provocative pieces that could be mass-marketed. The media frenzy that followed the collective's inaugural exhibition in Milan in 1981 catapulted Sottsass to international stardom and helped make Memphis a financial success.

In the last two years, Sottsass's work has been the subject of several important exhibitions, notably a major survey at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2006 and one at the Design Museum, London, last year, that he designed himself.

Sottsass's conviction that design should evoke emotion and communicate meaning paved the way for the work of designers like Philippe Starck, Ron Arad and Karim Rashid. Driven by his irreverent spirit and curiosity, Sottsass was always reinventing himself, and, in the process, he reinvigorated design.

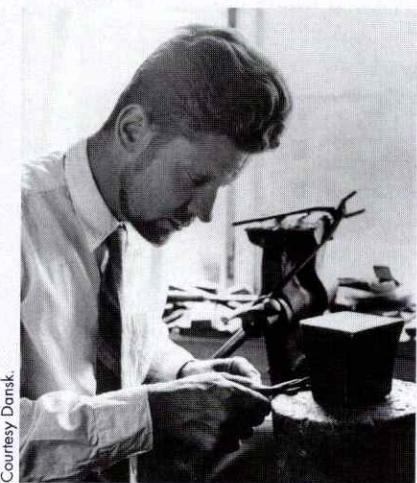
-SB

Jens Quistgaard 1919–2008

Jens Harald Quistgaard, the man whose timeless tabletop designs for Dansk were must-haves for three generations of Americans, died at his home in Vordingborg, Denmark, on January 4. He was 88. While Quistgaard's only formal training was at the hands of his sculptor father and a short apprenticeship at Georg Jensen, his work was appreciated the world over, winning the prestigious Lunning Prize for design excellence and six gold medals at the Milan Triennale.

Suave and timeless, Quistgaard's designs for Dansk were hugely influential from the moment they were brought to the United States by American entrepreneur Ted Nierenberg, beginning in 1954. The company's first offering was a teakwood-handled flatware pattern called *Fjord*, an instant best-seller that remained in the line for 30 years.

Next came *Købenstyle*, a line of brightly colored cook-and-serve ware that took enameled steel out of Grandma's kitchen and dressed it up for the dining room. Beautifully shaped, with cross-handled lids that doubled as trivets, *Købenstyle*'s fluid grace was achieved by enameling its surface so thickly that the enamel flowed into every crevice, giving its separately-applied handles the illusion of being all one piece with the cookware's body.



Quistgaard in 1954.

In 1958, Quistgaard designed a line of teakwood objects using a new process he termed "staving," after the construction method used for barrels: laminating strips of teak together with newly available epoxy glues. This produced a more attractive grain pattern and less waste of expensive teak than turning a single piece of wood with a lathe. The line included a tall teak ice bucket shaped like a conga drum, a dramatically flared salad bowl, and a "serving grid" with glass relish dishes whose square feet locked into the tray.

Quistgaard designed for Dansk into the 1980s, having great success with his "Designs with Light" collection of candleholders in cast iron, silverplate, brass and crystal. The candleholder line revealed Quistgaard's flair for merchandising; most of the designs used a very slender candle called a *Tiny Taper*, requiring the consumer to return to Dansk for refills.

Jens Quistgaard was more than a designer and entrepreneur; he was also an excellent engineer. His working drawings for Dansk showed not only how his objects should look, but exactly how they were to be manufactured. His work is seen today at the



Courtesy Dansk.

Above Jens Quistgaard's No. 810 ice bucket and No. 839 salad bowl, both in teak, for Dansk, 1958.

Louvre, the Museum of Modern Art, the Louisiana, in Denmark, and in countless homes of people who bought their Dansk new years ago, or who are collecting it today for the first time. —SM

Viktor Schreckengost 1906–2008



Courtesy Viktor Schreckengost Foundation.

Schreckengost at work on *The Early Settler (The Pioneer)*, 1954, a glazed ceramic sculpture for Lakewood High School, Cleveland, Ohio.

he once commented, "I thought I was on the right track."

Schreckengost was born in Sebring, Ohio, the son of an industrial potter. He studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art, then in Vienna with potter Michael Powolny and Wiener Werkstätte founder Josef Hoffmann. On his return to the United States in 1930, he took a teaching job at the Cleveland Institute of Art, where he founded the industrial design department. In 1931, he produced a punch bowl for Eleanor Roosevelt at Cowan Pottery. Marketed in a limited quantity for \$50, the *Jazz Bowl* is now considered a signature example of American Art Deco; one recently sold at auction for \$225,000.

Schreckengost's industrial design innovations in the 1930s at Murray Ohio included producing the first inexpensive children's pedal cars by using a single piece of metal, and halving the cost of making a bicycle by automating the welding. Over 40 years, Murray made more than 50 million Schreckengost-designed bicycles, becoming the largest bicycle manufacturer in the world. Among Schreckengost's many accomplishments in product safety were industrial paper cutters that necessitated pushing a button with each hand before the blade would descend, a simple trick that surely saved many fingers. His advances in efficiency

Viktor Schreckengost, who died on January 26 at the age of 101, was one of the most versatile designers of the 20th century. A mere list of his products is Whitmanesque: baby walkers, ball gowns and bicycles; cabinets, calendars, casseroles and chain guards; flashlights, fans, frying pans and furniture; lenses, lighting fixtures and luggage carriers; stage sets, stoves and streetlights; tea cups, tombstones, trays and tricycles. Nearly all his products were fantastically successful. "If we sold 400,000 of something,"

included tucking truck engines underneath the cab, increasing hauling room, and introducing electronic controls to high-speed printing presses. He also changed the appearance of everyday products: his 1930s *Flower Shop* dinnerware was the first modern mass-produced china in America, and his "Kooky Bikes" of the early '70s looked so outrageous that kids fell in love with them at first sight. One of his more inventive design methods was shaping the seat of a 1941 lawn chair by having colleagues sit one-by-one on a mound of soft clay covered with plastic. In the Navy in World War II, he developed the first radar recognition manuals, techniques for producing maps from aerial photography and artificial limbs based on ergonomic studies. Along the way, he also produced paintings, pottery and massive ceramic sculptures.

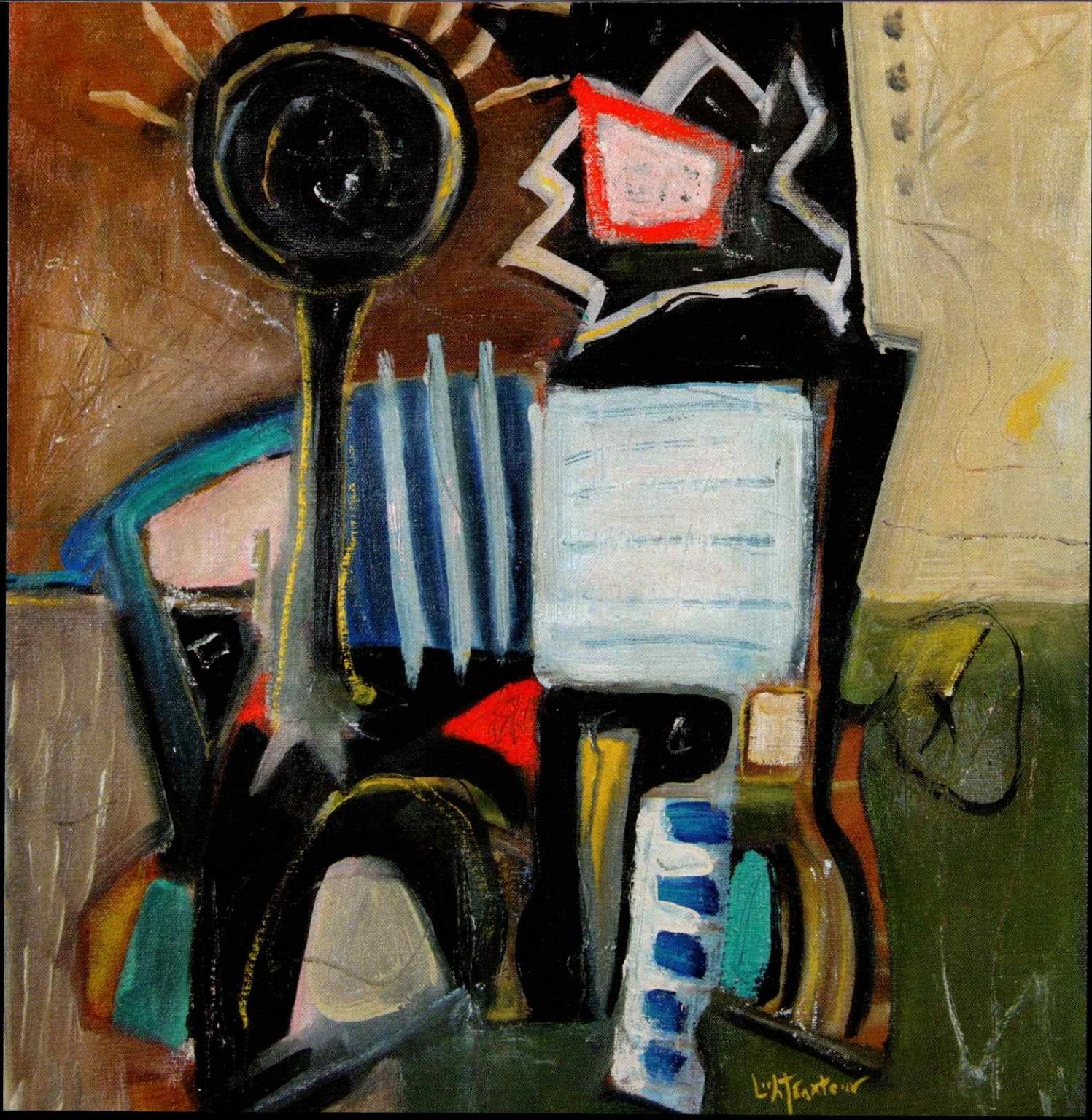
Schreckengost was the subject of a popular retrospective at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1999. In 2006, he received the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest cultural award.

Beloved as "Uncle Vik" in the Cleveland neighborhood where he lived much of his life, Schreckengost brought his warmth and playful, comprehensive intelligence to his work, making designs that were not only beautiful and functional, but fun. —Henry Adams

Below *New Yorker, or the Jazz Bowl*, c. 1931.



The Vicktor Schreckengost Foundation.



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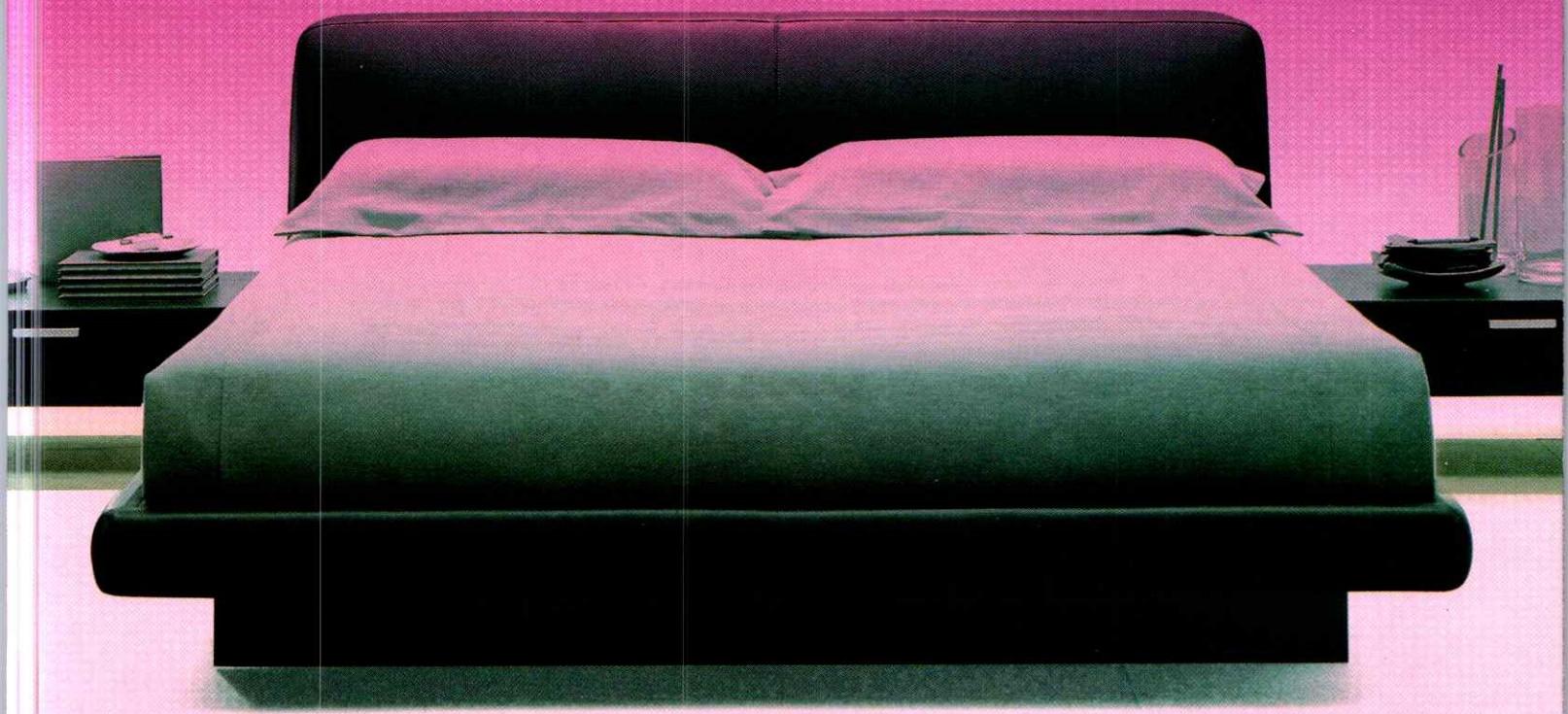
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Modernism Again?

The evolving marriage of design and technology

By Pierluigi Serraino

Judging by the impressive sales of Peter Gay's latest book *Modernism*, this monumental period in the history of humankind commands our attention more than ever. Sweeping away centuries of political and social order, modernism's effect on all domains of knowledge was so radical and irreversible that every aspect of the physical and cultural environment underwent scrutiny. Music, science, economics, engineering and the fine arts each went through their own revolutions. Architecture and design were no exception. Architecture, especially, responsive as it is to the collective forces that shape the identity of civilization, reflected the magnitude of this sea change in the city fabric that hosts the everyday life of the modern citizen. So violent and final was the rejection of the past in modernism's early days that the juxtaposition between old and new was uncompromising.

In that initial phase, first in the United Kingdom and shortly afterwards in the rest of Europe, architecture was responding to problems left unresolved since the Industrial Revolution. In its infancy, modernism took

the side of a working class brutalized by inhumane living conditions – the shortcomings of the rapid urban densification sparked by the emergence of a manufacturing economy. However, it took well over 100 years from the dawn of the industrial age for a new relationship between design and industrial technology to be understood as a tool for improving the lives of the labor force. Words such as mass production, functionality and economy of means permanently entered the vocabulary of the modern architect to push away the romantic, pre-industrial world of the crafts and welcome the new era of machine-made artifacts. This architecture of precision, based on scientific knowledge, ergonomics, optimal density, lighting conditions and *existens minimum*, was a material manifesto against the empty pomposity of 19th-century historical revivalist architecture.

In the leap across the Atlantic, however, modern architecture landed in a country with an entirely different set of concerns. By the late 1930s, the masters of the Modern Movement, with the exception of Le Corbusier, had taken up posts at Ivy League universities in the United States and were raising a new breed of American architect. In his 1981 book *From Bauhaus to Our House*, Tom Wolfe justifiably attacked the fallacy of applying the old continent's socio-political program to America. In Europe, influenced by a Marxist perspective, architects engaged in a form of class struggle by attending to the needs of the working class, the most vulnerable social strata. For European modernists, affordable housing was the equivalent of religious architecture in medieval times. The United States, on the other hand, was historically driven by the notion of self-determination, of the power of its citizens to shape their own destiny. Moreover, with the exception of New York, Philadelphia and Boston, it had little urban density akin to the typical European city. The might of the American industrial complex was the pride of the private sector and the magnet for global immigration to the New World. Given this dissimilar political scenario, the discourse that supported the collaboration of modern architecture with new technology would not stand.

Yet there was an equal interest among American architects in such collaboration. In his essay "The Modern House," published in the mid 1930s, Philip Johnson wrote, "...our entire concept of house-building must change ... to reap the advantages made available by modern invention and improvement." Revisiting patterns of living and increasing comfort for all citizens became the goal. The challenge was convincing a conservative public.

What to do then? In 1932, Alfred H. Barr, director of the young Museum of Modern Art in New York, came up with the label "International Style" (according to noted cultural critic Lewis Mumford, neither Henry Russell Hitchcock nor Philip Johnson coined the term). This extreme makeover shed the left-wing political connotations of the new architectural aesthetic, making it palatable to New York's power elite. Clean lines, industrial materials and lack of ornament were some of the design ingredients, cleansed of their socially progressive European roots, that made up the American modernist recipe. Publication of radically modernist private homes designed by architects such as Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra on the West Coast and William Lescaze and Edward Durell Stone on the East, together with the heady euphoria surrounding the 1939 World's Fair, prepped the public to endorse grand modernist landmarks. The Equitable Building (1948) in Portland, Oregon, by Piero Belluschi, the Lever House (1951) by Skidmore,



Ezra Stoller © Esto.

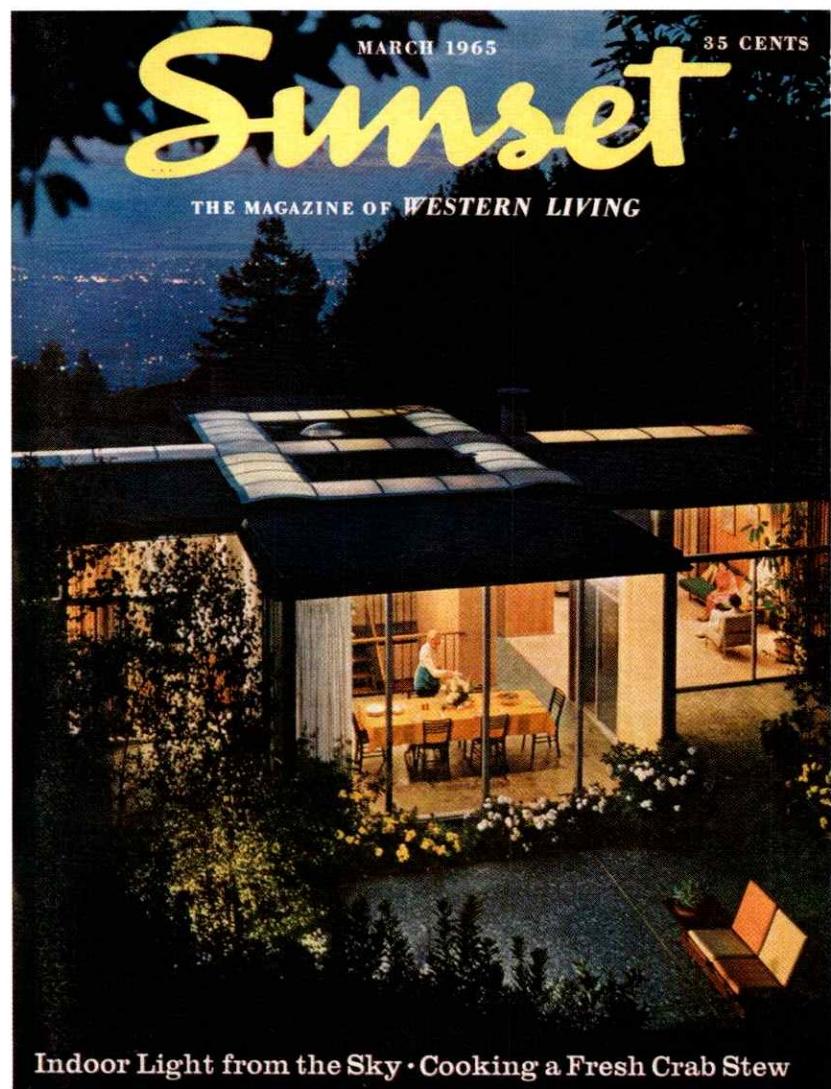
Left The Seagram Building (1958) by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in New York City. Initially admired for its sleek, slender profile, it spawned innumerable, less-inspired imitations that helped turn the public away from modernism.

Owings & Merrill, and the Seagram Building (1958) by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, both in New York, became the paradigmatic standards for American corporate architecture.

As the curtain walls of those landmarks cloned themselves in the thousands of high-rises that made up postwar downtown America, however, the unhappiness of the public grew. The obtuse application of rational planning principles in urban renewals, including the brutal construction of highways through city centers, led to a loss of distinctive character and a sense of anonymity. The resultant decline in the quality of life and property values augured certain death for modern architecture. By the end of the 1960s, the austere schemes of modernist architects garnered only public condemnation. But 40 years later, modern architecture is being revived to popular acclaim. How is that possible? And why now?

Modernism, through all its permutations to the present day, has stood for an alliance with technology in the belief that this will yield the betterment of human life – in spite of the perennial elusiveness of this goal. Technology's manifestation in architecture goes beyond the hardware that makes a functional building; it is an investment in the future of knowledge. As alarm over the maladies of the natural environment has engendered new faith in technology to make them right, so sustainable design is the latest incarnation of modern architecture, which has learned its environmental lesson and is responding accordingly. Diversity is the strength of this renewed commitment to modernism, rather than its contradiction. Architects such as Tadao Ando, Zaha Hadid, Renzo Piano, Rafael Moneo, Steven Holl and Frank Gehry can coherently coexist as part of the same trajectory without the straitjacket of a single formal language. Long gone are the days of the endless repetition of the Miesian high rise.

But in light of this modernist renewal, what explains the simultaneous comeback of the mid-century modern style? A major factor is nostalgia for the postwar period in which technology's relationship with design was considered largely positive in the United States. We see it as a more innocent era, when technology brought us closer to nature and strengthened family life: large expanses of glass in the single-family home delivered suburban trees and grass into our living rooms, while new appliances reduced the chores of domestic life to free up leisure time. These changes helped produce a



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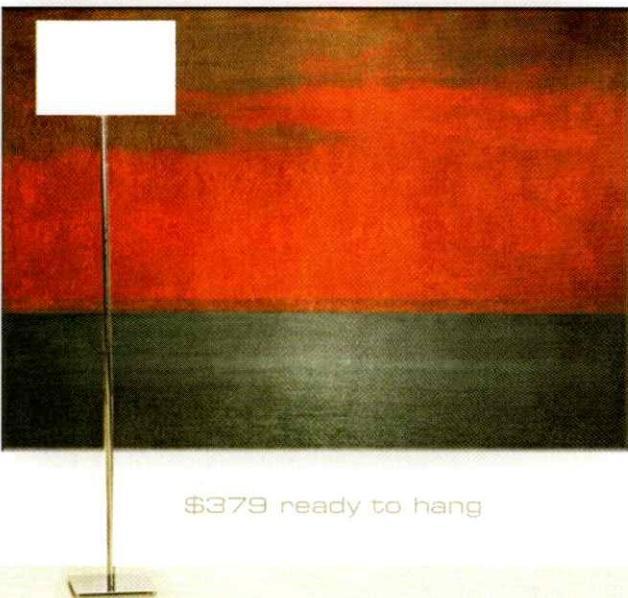
Above Lifestyle architectural photography at mid century, such as in this 1965 cover of *Sunset* magazine, fostered positive attitudes towards modernism.

reassuringly solid and satisfied image of the typical American family. Today, as the digital revolution radically transforms our lives again, this recent antecedent, made familiar through the recycling of period lifestyle photography in fashion, film, and advertising, mitigates our anxiety about this ever changing technology with its pervasive newness.

Discussions about architecture are framed increasingly in terms of technological performance. But is that enough to make great architecture? Fortunately, some designers are committed to a cultural critique of technology itself. The work of Ettore Sottsass and Philippe Starck comes to mind: neither judgmental nor prescriptive, but a reminder that, along with the benefits of each innovation, technology also informs our notions of class, aesthetics and other social and cultural phenomena. Either way, the modernist marriage of architecture and technology is now stronger than ever. ■

Architect **Pierluigi Serraino** is the author of four books, including *Modernism Rediscovered* and *NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernism*. His projects and articles have appeared in *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Design* and *ArCA*.

Courtesy *Sunset* magazine. Cover photo by Ernie Braun.



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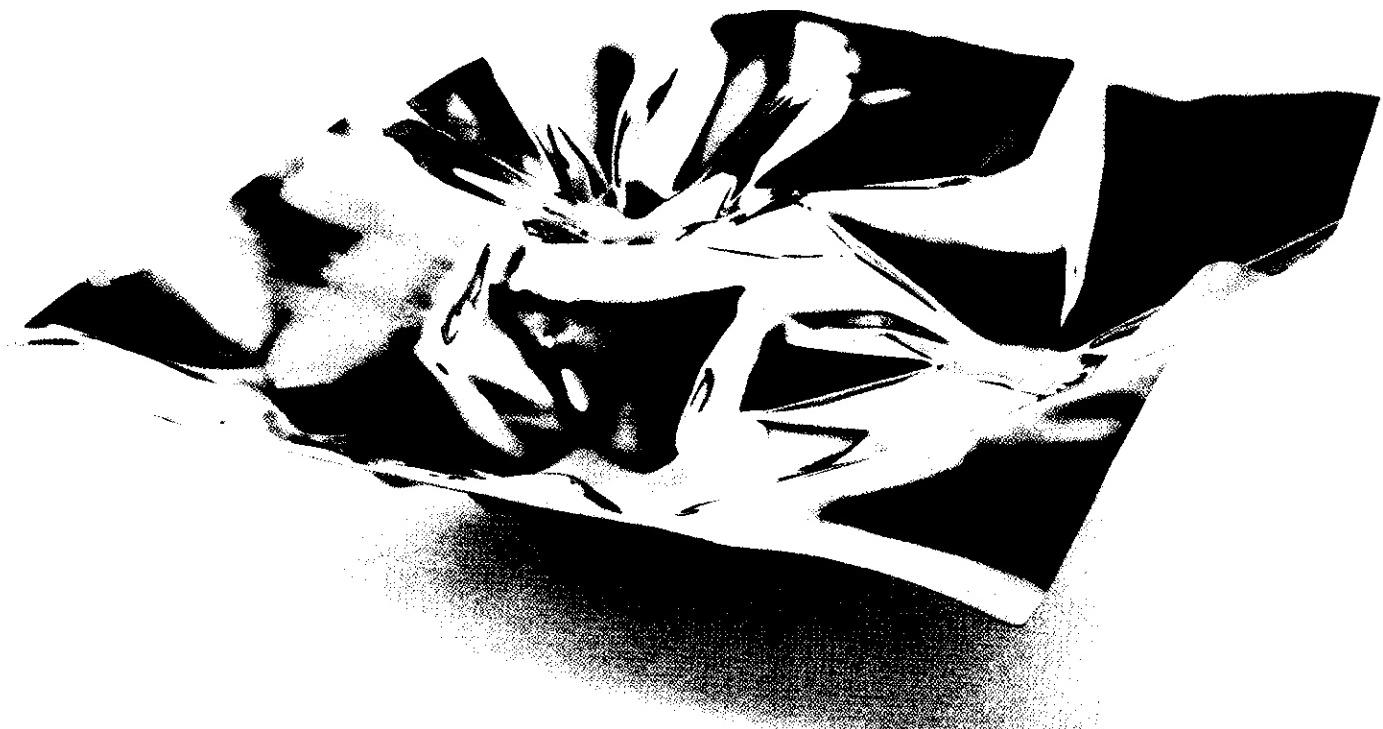
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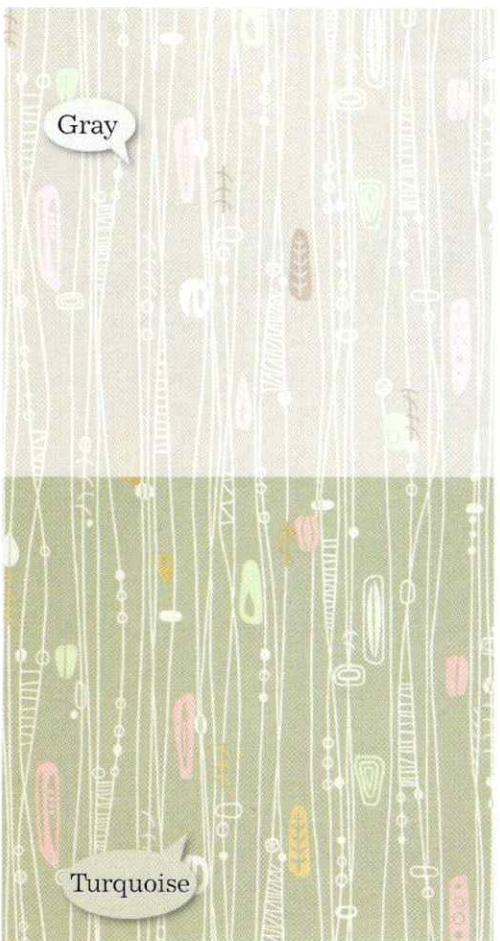
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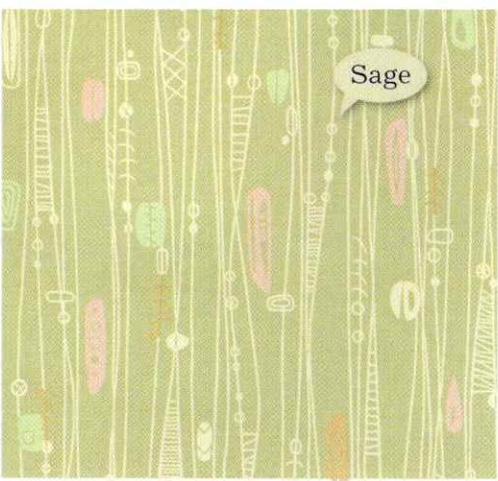


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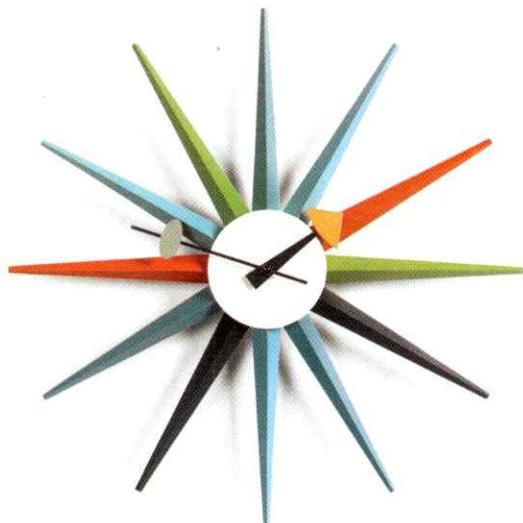
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Tapio Wirkkala, Two *Pollo* vases in black for Rosenthal, 1970s.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

On the occasion of our 10th anniversary, *Modernism* asked experts active in the modern design field to respond to the following questions:

1. What was the most important moment for 20th-century modernism in the past 10 years?
2. What is the greatest discovery of 20th-century modernism yet to be made?

Their answers, varied and thought provoking, show that modernism is alive and well and still evolving. —Andrea Truppin

Dan Tolson

Associate Director, 20th-Century Decorative Art & Design
Christie's, London, UK

The groundbreaking 2001 traveling exhibition on supremely gifted and prolific Finnish designer Tapio Wirkkala (1915–85) was key to developing new awareness of mid-century Scandinavian design. “Tapio Wirkkala, Hand, Eye, Thought,” which originated at the Museum of Art and Design (now the Design Museum) in Helsinki, had spectacular visual punch, with such displays as a stunning series of large laminated birch *Pyrörre* (Whirl) wall panels. The exhibition communicated the great breadth and diversity of Wirkkala’s genius, from his collaborative efforts with Venini glassworks in Venice, Rosenthal ceramics in Germany and Mexican silversmiths, through to sculpture, painting, architecture and mass-produced objects, such as tableware, furniture, lighting, posters, postage stamps and packaging. A selection of Wirkkala’s sketches, notes and models helped to reveal his poetic approach to design, which he expressed, in part, as “all materials

have their own unwritten laws.... the designer should aim at being in harmony with his material.” The accompanying catalogue remains an unsurpassed guide, ensuring Wirkkala’s standing among the greatest designers of the 20th century.

Ettore Sottsass, who sadly passed away last December, is well known in name, but his work is arguably undervalued and overdue for rediscovery. His passing provides a valuable opportunity for reappraisal. Significantly, the Los Angeles

Betty Woodman, Large “winged”
sculptural vessel.



George Nakashima, *Minguren II* coffee table, 1980, in walnut, burlwood and rosewood.

County Museum held the first major survey exhibition of his work in the United States in 2006, followed by an exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Last year, the Design Museum in London mounted “Ettore Sottsass: Work in Progress.” Sottsass, and the work of his collaborators at Memphis and Studio Alchymia, is surely one of the few remaining neglected, yet key, areas of 20th-century design.

Garth Clark

Historian, critic, private dealer, recipient of the Mather Award for distinguished art criticism, New York, New York

The last decade has been the most decisive for 20th-century ceramics. It is now appreciated and understood as never before. Its art stature has grown; its prices have soared. But there has been a major casualty: the American craft movement, which died in the late 1990s. It lost its flagship, the American Craft Museum, now the Museum of Arts and Design, and its main organization, the American Craft Council, has been in a moribund state for nearly two decades.

What killed craft? It could just be old age; the movement was over 100 years old and its role in society had steadily been diminishing. The final *coup de grâce* may have come from the success of contemporary design, which is now so creative, diverse and

playful with materials, that craft has been sidelined to the craft and renaissance fairs, where its nostalgic presence plays well. The crafts movement, ceramics included, has also suffered from art envy, an insecurity that did enormous harm, since craftspeople were considered great only if they escaped craft and entered the fine arts.

Only a few ceramicists have managed to pass through the fine-mesh filter of high arts, however: Ron Nagle, Betty Woodman, Ken Price, Kathy Butterly and some others. At the same time, more and more non-ceramic artists have adopted the medium: Anthony Caro, Kiki Smith, Jeff Koons, Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor. Their work is shown at A-list galleries for A-list prices. Gladstone Gallery, one of the art world's most significant mega-galleries, opened its 2007-08 season last September with the exhibition "Makers and Modelers: Works in Ceramic," one of six ceramics shows in Chelsea that month. Indeed, ceramics is now so ubiquitous on the New York art scene, that it is being spoken of as the "new" photography. It is an annoying misnomer for a medium that is 30,000 years old, but still reflective of its new stature. Ceramic works now sell for over \$5 million (Jeff Koon's *Michael Jackson and Bubbles*), shattering the porcelain price ceiling that once caused ceramics to be known in the trade as "terra worthless."

Craft potters need to find a new role and context if they are to survive. But ceramics is now more connected to the mainstream marketplace for art and design than ever before. Its challenge will be grappling with the meaning and opportunities of its new freedoms. For years it has bemoaned its marginalization and now that it has broken through, the art of fire may be a little like the dog that spends its life chasing cars. When it actually catches one, it faces a conundrum. What is it going to do? Specialization in one medium is no longer in vogue, so ceramists are going to have to explore a multimedia universe.

Evan Snyderman

Co-Owner

R 20th Century Gallery, New York, New York

When R 20th Century opened its doors in 1997, the market for 20th-century design was just getting started. The collectibles were Eames, Noguchi and Knoll. Outside of the big names and manufacturers, little was known. We would still find things such as Laverne *Tulip* chairs in the garbage on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

However, in the past six years, we have seen a sea change. The first indication for us was an invitation to participate in a 20th-century fair at the Louvre des Antiquaires in Paris in 2002 and 2003. This fair pooled together the greatest dealers in the world under one roof, and collectors were introduced to a new level of 20th-century connoisseurship. In 2005, Design Miami/Basel followed up by inviting many of the same galleries to participate in a boutique, high-end design fair, held in conjunction with the mother of all art fairs, Art Basel. This provided the first public introduction of 20th-century design to the art collector.

The price of a modern design masterpiece is inconsequential compared to that of an important work of art. The fact that one can still purchase a major 20th-century work for well under \$100,000 is something that many art collectors are now aware of. When a Carlo Mollino table sold for \$3.8 million at Christie's in 2005, people started to pay attention.

Midcentury Brazilian design is building great interest in the marketplace and has a lot of room to grow, since much of the great work has yet to be uncovered. Designers such as Joaquim Tenreiro, José Zanine Caldas and Sergio Rodrigues are just gaining steam and are still relatively unknown outside of Brazil. Brazilian design combines great craftsmanship, rare or exotic materials and a style that can be described only as Brazilian. The other important area is the American studio furniture movement of the late '60s and early '70s. Artist/designer/craftsmen such as Wendell Castle, Arthur Espenet Carpenter and Wharton Esherick produced some of the most innovative and expertly crafted work in America, helping to form what we now know as the Art Furniture Movement, and influenced generations of furniture makers and contemporary designers.

Michael Maharam

Principal, Maharam, New York, New York

The proliferation of the "new" – a massive infusion of good new product design – made it more challenging to sort the good from the bad than in the past. Thus, many aesthetes turned to the past, where good design had already been benchmarked, and they found interesting material, craftsmanship and form. This fed their desire for individualism in the face of an increasingly mass-produced world, where excellent exposure and distribution of new products was causing people to feel that they were becoming aesthetic lemmings. The explosion of the art market led to the realization that vintage furniture could have greater collectible appeal. This drew all the decorative arts into the collecting vacuum created by escalating art prices.

We're in a market that is driven by obscurity, compression and manipulation; it's all about those with marketing finesse finding something rare and propelling it into the limelight. The days of the galleries and auction houses looking back and excavating are largely over. There just isn't enough available content with adequate investment upside. This opportunity now lives with new production of limited series by the present generation of genius, a place that more closely mirrors the art world, playing to the allure of exclusivity. This model, whose forefathers included non-mass producers from Nakashima to Kuramata, found its modern iteration initially in those like Ron Arad and Galerie Kreo, and has come to include all the Salone del Mobile darlings: individuals (Fernando and Humberto Campana, Marc Newson, Tokujin Yoshioka) and large companies alike, with the launch of the Vitra Editions Series.



Wendell Castle, *Castle* armchair in red gel-coated fiberglass-reinforced plastic, c. 1970.



Harry Bertoia, Monumental "Willow" sculpture, c. 1968. Stainless steel rods atop steel base.

Frank Maraschello

Director, 20th Century Decorative Arts,
Bonhams, New York, New York

The term "modernism" has been kicked around since the 18th century. Some define it as the ever-changing, trend-setting theories and practices of new design and materials. As a longtime auction house specialist, I take a more historical view of the term and celebrate those visionaries of 20th-century design who demonstrate a "modernist" spirit. There have been far too many highlights for the 20th-century auction world in the last 10 years to single out one as "the pinnacle." I will merely note six significant moments that seem, in retrospect, to have crossed a threshold in furthering the appreciation of this spirit.



Charles and Ray Eames,
LCW chairs for Herman
Miller, plywood with
Calico ash veneer (right),
plywood with red aniline-
dye finish, 1945.

March 1995. First 20th-century object to reach \$1 million at auction: Leaded glass Virginia creeper lamp, Tiffany Studios. Sotheby's New York.

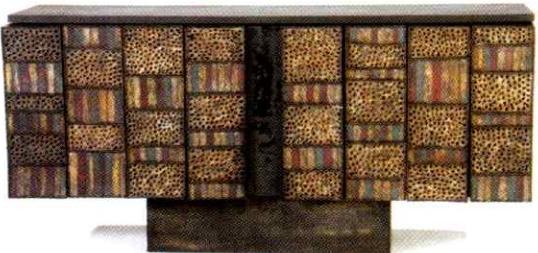
June 2004. Record price for postwar design and record price for the artist at auction: Rare mahogany armchair, Alexandre Noll, c. 1947. Sotheby's New York, \$680,000.

October 2004. Record price for any work of 20th-century decorative arts at auction and record price for the artist at auction: *Musiciens et Antilopes*, a bas-relief by Léon Indenbaum, 1919. Christie's Paris, \$4,627,854.

June 2005. Second highest price for any work of 20th-century decorative arts at auction and record price for the artist at auction: Unique oak and glass table for the Casa Orengo, Carlo Mollino, 1949. Christie's New York, \$3,824,000.

June 2006. Record price for single owner collection of 20th-century decorative arts at auction: The Claude and Simone Dray Collection of Art Deco. Christie's Paris. Totals over \$75 million.

December 2006. Record price for the artist at auction: Walnut Arlen dining table, George Nakashima, 1988. Sotheby's New York, \$822,000.



Paul Evans, Painted and perforated cabinet with four bi-fold doors in steel and slate, 1963.

I find significance in the retrofitting of contemporary studio artists, modernist designers of a sort, into the world of contemporary fine arts. Laboring under the now somewhat pejorative heading of "craftsmen," they are enjoying newfound attention as modernist artists who choose to "paint" with the potter's wheel, jigsaw or molten glass. Even the legendary American Craft Museum has rethought its 21st-century position and rechristened itself the Museum of Arts and Design. As appreciation rises, so do prices, with contemporary

art exhibitions now offering painting, sculpture, studio glass and ceramics, all vying for the same collecting dollar. China, one of the hottest new areas of contemporary painting, is also producing extremely high quality contemporary *pâte-de-verre* by Loretta Yang and other studio artists for marketing in contemporary art galleries. Is Dale Chihuly the next Frank Stella?

Donald Albrecht

Independent Curator and Curator of Architecture and Design,
Museum of the City of New York,
New York, New York

Over the past 20 years or so, our knowledge of American modernism has gotten deeper, with more information and analysis about well-known figures, and broader, with more people and movements to explore. Two important exhibitions, and accompanying books, were "The Machine Age" at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1986, curated by Richard Guy Wilson, Dianne Pilgrim and Dickran Tashjian, which put architecture and design between the world wars into greater context, and Jean-Louis Cohen's "Scenes of the World to Come" (Canadian Center for Architecture, 1995), which upended the assumptions that Europe has always been the influencer, America, the influenced. I myself have been proud to curate shows on such under-appreciated figures as Alexander Girard, Dorothy Draper and photographer Samuel H. Gottscho.

Ron Labaco

Curator of Decorative Arts
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

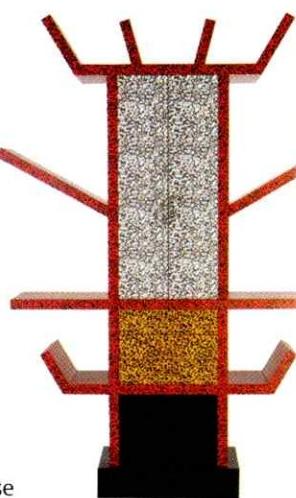
Rather than a single moment, I feel that the two most important factors that contributed to the appreciation of modernism over the past decade are the combined phenomena of the internet and the increased reissue of design classics. The internet made information about modern design available to a global audience (through eBay, design blogs and museum, auction house, gallery and ecommerce websites) with an unprecedented immediacy. This in turn fueled a consumer demand that manufacturers recognized by reintroducing the classic designs that captivated the public's interest.

Japanese design from the second half of the 20th century, such as the work of Shigeru Uchida, Toshiyuki Kita and, in particular, Shiro Kuramata (1934–91). Kuramata brought a minimalist, poetic sensibility to the field of design, combining his cultural perspective with an interest in modern materials to create beautiful, evocative statements. Masterworks such as the *How High the Moon* chair (1986) in wire mesh, and the *Miss Blanche* chair (1988) with artificial roses suspended in blocks of acrylic, make him one of the great designers of the 20th century.

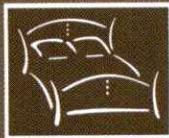


Courtesy Christie's Images Ltd., 2008.

Carlo Mollino, Unique Oak and Glass Table for the Casa Orengo, 1949. Sold at Christie's for \$3.8 million in 2005.



Ettore Sottsass/Memphis, *Casablanca* bookcase in colored laminate, 1981.



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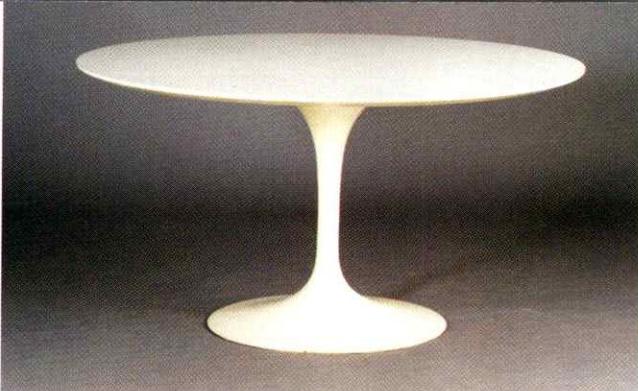
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Eero Saarinen, "Pedestal" dining table for Knoll, 1956.

Grant Seltzer

Chief Strategy Officer

Jules Seltzer Associates, Los Angeles, California

Modernism, as a movement, is more than 80 years old. Its design heyday was in the '50s and '60s, with the world's greatest designers: Mies van der Rohe, Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, Isamu Noguchi, Warren Platner, Harry Bertoia, Hans Wegner, Arne Jacobsen, Poul Kjaerholm and Florence Knoll. Sales took off in the '60s and '70s, but the residential market for modernist design almost died in the '80s. A few diehards hung on until, in late 1994, Ray Kennedy of Herman Miller and I chatted about whether people would reconsider the "classics" again for their homes. It was a time that design was creeping into everyone's lives, whether they knew it or not. Designer jeans, cell phones, shopping malls, fancier, larger automobiles, remodeled homes for larger families and new architect-designed homes for the affluent were in vogue. In early 1995, our joint venture, the first Herman Miller for the Home showroom, opened in Los Angeles. The resurgence gained speed when Knoll started a similar residential division, Knoll Studio. Vitra, Fritz Hansen and the Italians followed suit.

Tom Peters, business guru and futurist, predicted that the first decade of the 21st century would be "The Decade of Design." Was he right? All you need do is look around. Design is everywhere! With new forms of technology and many young designers jumping on board, the movement is becoming populated with visionary companies such as Moroso, Paola Lenti, Moooi, Ingo Maurer, Cappellini and Tord Boontje. Furniture is becoming art, and more than ever, is being strongly tied to architecture. Indoor/outdoor living is the rage with new technology in fabrics. But look for Herman Miller, Knoll and the other originators to surge in new design concepts in the coming decade to take back the lead.

Hugh Grant

Founder, Director and Curator

Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art, Denver, Colorado

Perhaps the most important moment for 20th-century modernism in the past 10 years was the re-opening of New York's Museum of

Sergio Rodrigues, Coffee table in rosewood for Oca.



Modern Art in November 2004. The institution has not only been a great window to modern art — since the first director, Alfred Barr, courageously mounted exhibits that disturbed many Americans' perception of art — but the expansion signaled the continued public interest in and support of modernism. In addition, MoMA renewed its commitment to showing painting and sculpture with decorative art, as I do at the Kirkland Museum. Other museums will begin or expand design departments and, as the public gains a greater understanding of the simultaneous developments in fine and decorative art, the design market will continue to strengthen significantly.

The greatest rediscovery of 20th-century modernism will be the increasing realization by the public that decorative art is as legitimate, original and important as fine art. When furniture and other objects by Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Rennie Mackintosh started selling for large sums, decorative art acquired greater respect. As auction and dealer sales of lesser known designers continue to increase in number and value, and as museums continue to exhibit more decorative art, the public's esteem will be expanded and enriched. At Kirkland Museum, decorative art and fine art are shown together in a salon environment. Visitors from around the world comment that it is one of the most exciting museum experiences because of the natural feeling of having painting and sculpture and decorative art "in concert" as it has been for centuries in houses.

Michael Webb

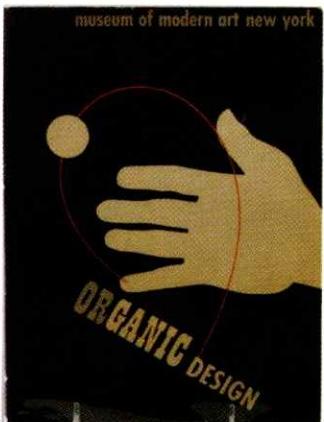
Author, Los Angeles, California

Since we are now well into the first decade of the 21st century, I think the discussion should be about "modernism," rather than "20th-century modernism." Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown L.A. demonstrates the power, beauty and utility of modern architecture. It enhances the urban and musical experience and it supplies an icon for a city that has always promised more than it could deliver. And it rebuts the slander that Gehry is willful and impractical.

John Lautner, who designed extraordinary houses for 60 years, mostly in southern California, is widely known only for the Chemosphere. The exhibition at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles in July 2008 should persuade even prejudiced easterners that his work deserves greater respect.



Wharton Esherick,
Music stand, with
bentwood frame, 1962.



Catalogue for the Museum of Modern Art's 1941 "Organic Design in Home Furnishings," written by Eliot Noyes, cover by E. McKnight Kauffer, that featured award-winning pieces by Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, among others.



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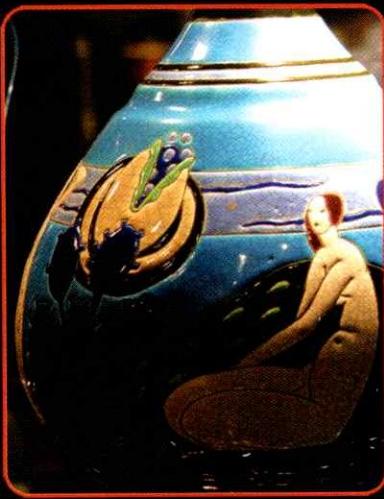


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John Sollo

Co-owner, Sollo Rago Modern Auctions, Lambertville, New Jersey

Rather than there being a single defining moment in the 20th-century modern movement, it was a process that evolved over a long period of time. People like ourselves, Richard Wright and others, who had access to the material, identified what they thought was important, with the public ultimately weighing in on it and establishing the market. We were extremely excited about the work of artists like Paul Evans, Phil Powell, George Nakashima and

Wharton Esherick, while for Wright, it was the work of both well-established and emerging artists from Italy, France and Scandinavia. So over the last ten years, if not well before that, the market was fueled by people who had a genuine love for the material, and the audience's positive vote on that work brings us to where we are today.

Wharton Esherick is the greatest modern genius in American furniture design. Esherick was designing modern furniture well before other important figures like Paul Frankl and Charles and Ray Eames. The American studio furniture movement was spawned by Esherick and was a pivotal source of influence for American designers like Nakashima, Powell, Evans and Sam Maloof, and it continues to be today for a new generation of international furniture designers. As established as Esherick's work

has become, the market for it is still developing, but the increasing collecting of Esherick by museums and the exceptional prices his work now commands, as well as the 2003-04 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, exhibition, "The Maker's Hand: American Studio Furniture, 1940-1990," have helped to solidify his undeniable role in establishing the field of modern design.

Mark McDonald

Owner, Mark McDonald, Ltd., Hudson, New York

The most important moment for 20th-century modernism in the past ten years was the work of three people: Alex Payne, James Zemaitis and Richard Wright. In the late '90s, Alex and James began gearing their Phillips auction sales towards the aggressive art buyers, who had never looked at decorative arts as being on the same level as the fine arts. At approximately the same time, Richard began his Chicago-based auction house, upping the ante with presentation and connoisseurship that attracted these art buyers as well. These auction houses solidified their advantage over the dealers and fairs, becoming the primary source for retailing modernism.

Odd as it may seem, I think the work of Charles Eames and his partner, Ray, is on the verge of being re-discovered. Even though considered by many to be the most important contributors to the

20th-century modern furniture movement, this team's popularity and prices have been greatly overshadowed recently. I believe prices for original condition *Eames Storage Units* and *LCW* and *Zenith* fibreglass shell chairs have become relatively cheap! How is it possible that very ordinary pieces of George Nakashima and Paul Evans can fetch higher prices than exceptional examples of the Eameses's work? Just because a piece is "custom" as opposed to "production" does not necessarily mean it is more rare or valuable. I cannot believe that work by a talented woodworker or a gifted metal smith can be given the same weight in an historical context as the Eameses.



Shiro Kurumata, *How High the Moon* chair, nickel-plated wire-mesh, 1986.

Terence Riley

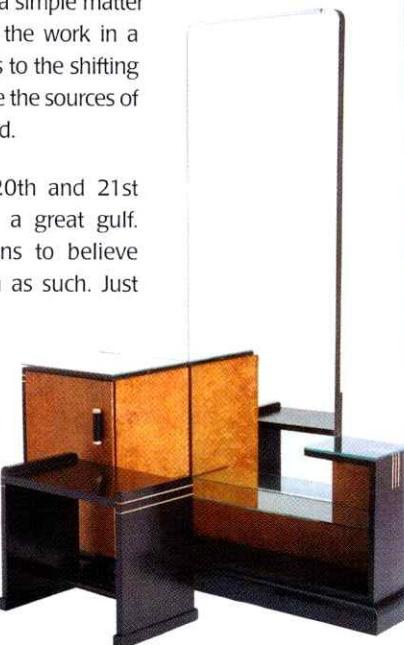
Director, Miami Art Museum, Miami, Florida

In 2001, the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum presented simultaneous and complementary exhibitions entitled "Mies in Berlin" (co-curated by myself and Barry Bergdoll) and "Mies in America" (curated by Phyllis Lambert). Taken together, the two exhibitions represented the most comprehensive look in a generation at the long and influential career of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, arguably the greatest and most influential architect of the 20th century. Despite this, serious study of Mies's work had been long neglected during the decades after his death.

The two exhibitions demonstrated that Mies's work was relevant and critical to the architecture of the 21st century. Following two decades wherein Mies was held up as the *echt* symbol of modernism gone wrong, a new look at the work — from a more objective point in time — demonstrated the shallowness of the postmodern critique of Mies, in particular, and the 20th century in general.

For the first time, serious research was devoted to understanding Mies's work in its varied contexts — from Weimar Germany to post-World War II America; from the city to the suburb to the countryside; from early, experimental works to mature and late works. Rather than reducing him and his work to a simple matter of aphorisms, the exhibitions saw the work in a fresh light, with greater connections to the shifting cultural points of reference that were the sources of his work than previously understood.

The dividing line between the 20th and 21st centuries may seem now to be a great gulf. However, there are many reasons to believe that it will not always be seen as such. Just as 16th-century architecture in Europe can be seen as a seamless extension of the intellectual ferment of the Quattrocento, the critical arc of the coming decades will not easily be separated from that of the 20th century.



Joaquim Tenreiro for Laubisch-Hirth (Brazil), Inlaid vanity and bench.



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Twentieth Century Design Specialist
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It all comes down to what we call "the commercialization of modernism." The marketing of modernism is responsible for its great success over the past ten years. Some contributing factors are:

- Mass media with an ever larger variety of publications and even television shows devoted to today's design trends.
- A remarkable array of beautiful auction catalogues, illustrated books and internet sites offering information.
- A profusion of fairs, shows and lectures.
- Mass advertising to draw the public in to everything from local art shows to major museum exhibitions.
- New museums by star architects housing a increasing number of works of modern and contemporary design and art, with museum shops offering mass distribution and imaging of those pieces.
- Mass marketing of designers and artists as celebrities, featuring everything from expensive one-of-a-kind pieces to utilitarian articles.
- Trend-setting dealers, many acting as agents for designers and artists, feeding a frenzied public of collectors.
- The auction houses and internet auctions which have pioneered the marketing and promoted the accessibility of these competitive markets to both the buyer and the seller of design.

Reed Kroloff

Director, Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum,
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

In the last 10 years, one of the most important developments in modernism has been the rise of such publications as *Modernism*, *Dwell* and *Wallpaper*. Although each of these is very different, and one could argue they reflect, rather than lead a trend, I would counter that these publications help bring modernism to a vastly increased audience. They also make the assumption for that audience that modernism isn't something odd, out of reach or unusable; rather, it is very much attainable and useful in their lives (and also, at times, glamorous). In short, it is part of everyday life.

Though admittedly a bit self-serving, I would predict the recognition of Cranbrook as the American Bauhaus. When you look at who came

out of this school (Eero Saarinen, Charles Eames, Florence Knoll, Harry Bertoia, Daniel Libeskind, to name only five – and there are many, many more),

it is truly remarkable. No other place can claim either the range or level of achievement, or, and perhaps most importantly, effect on the American modern movement. Try to think of American modernism without Cranbrook: quite simply, you can't. Yet when was the last time someone really discussed it seriously? ■



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, MR20
cantilevered armchair in tubular
steel, wood and leather, 1927.



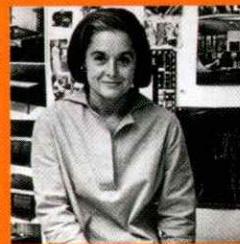
Marc Newson, *Orgone* molded
plastic chairs, 1993.

FLORENCE KNOLL: DEFINING MODERN

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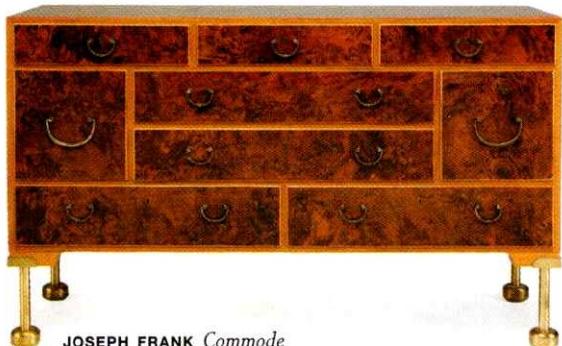


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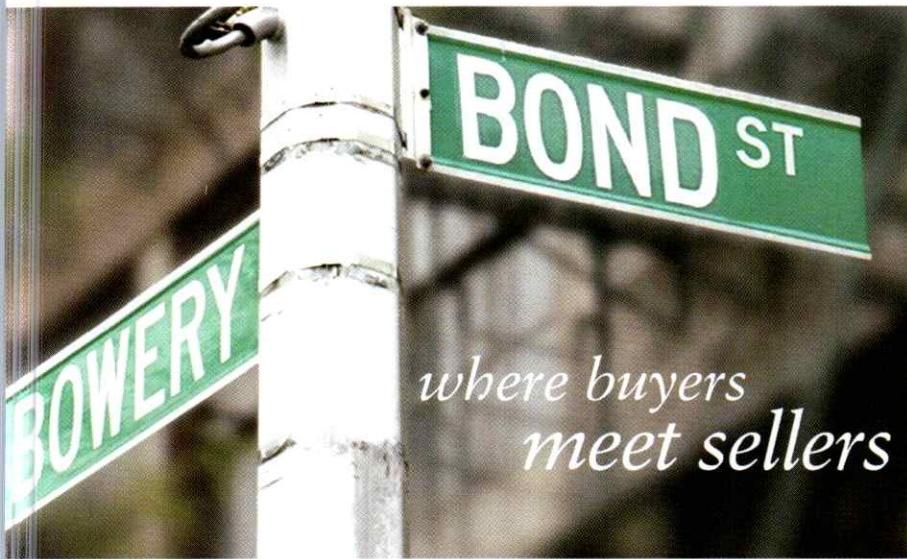
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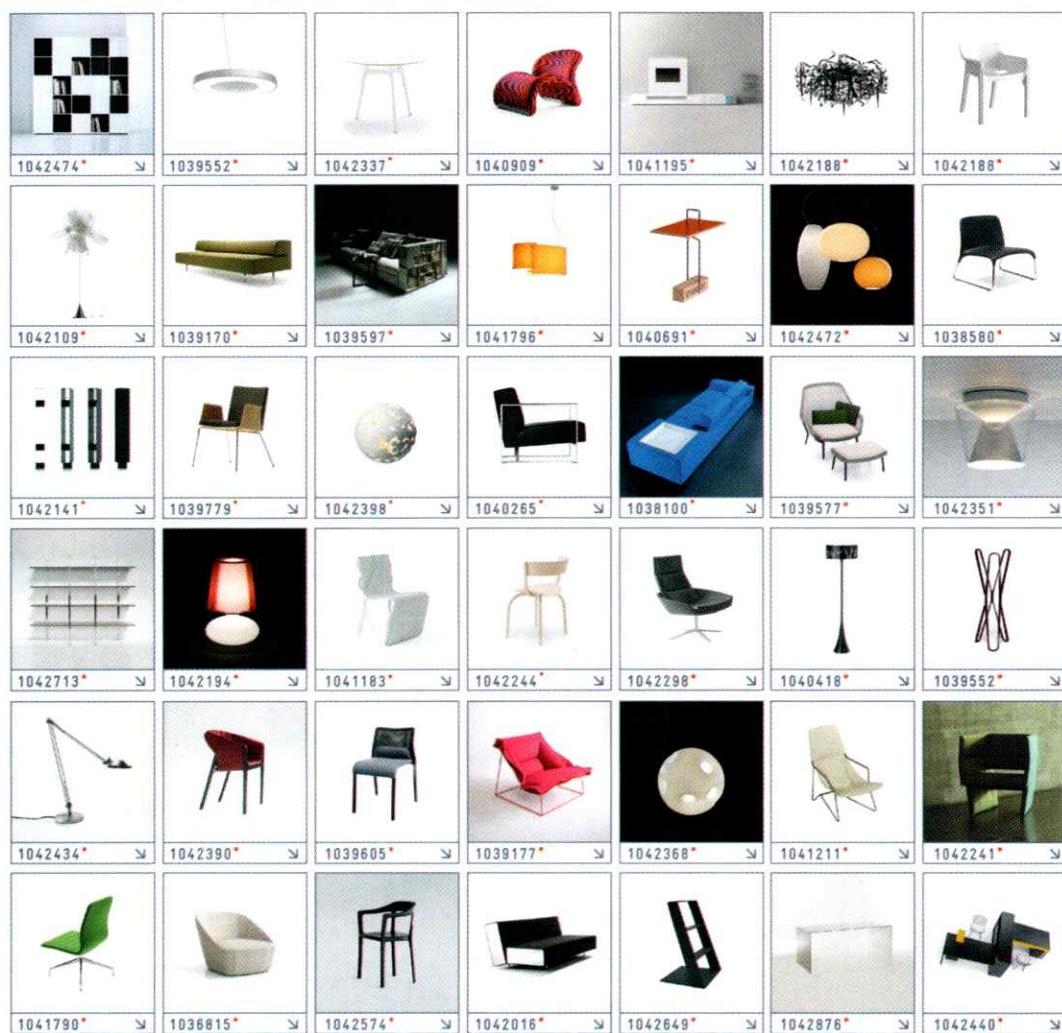
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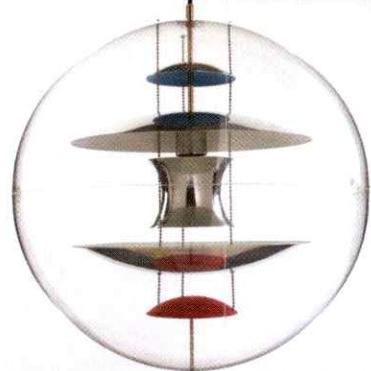
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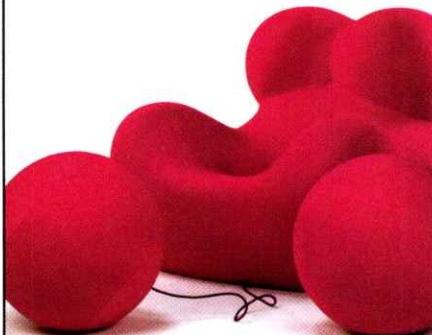


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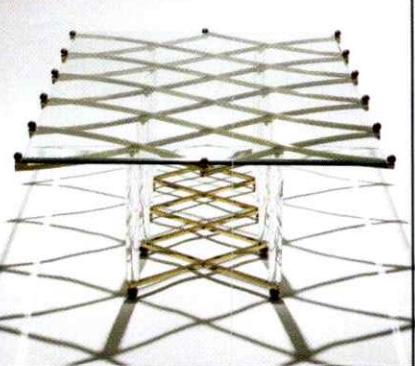
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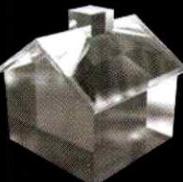
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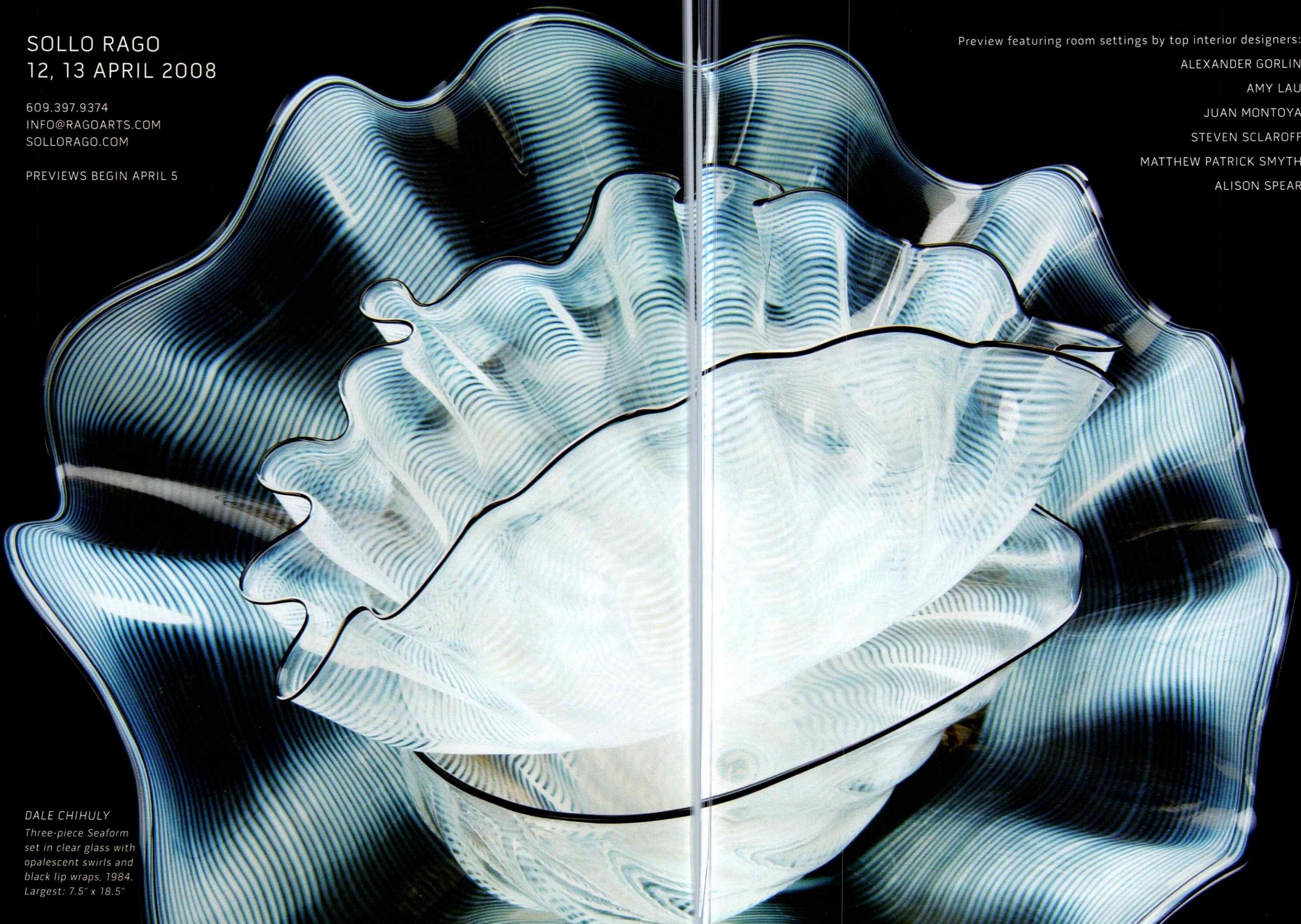
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JOHN LAUTNER DISSOLVING THE CONFINES

By Nicholas Olsberg

It is said that the great subject of American culture is the contemplation of space, and that the truest model of an American artist is the rebellious idealist from the wilderness who works with stunning but unselfconscious originality. Growing up in the north woods, with contempt for academies and conventions, finding rules only in the laws of nature, and with absolute confidence that truth could emerge only from the force of his own imagination, the Los Angeles architect John Lautner (1911–94) was an artist firmly in this native tradition. His great subject was the uncovering of space, and his work was a search for structures and shapes that would liberate that space to capture a sublime sense of spaciousness. Until very recently, the supple and sinuous results that came from this quest – fluid spaces and molded forms, buildings as archetypal shelter and buildings as transcendent vista – seemed extravagantly, even shockingly, original. Now, as architecture everywhere is moving into this sculptural territory, we are looking differently at those like Lautner who first took it past the orthodox systems and geometries of the International school toward a more luxuriant, emotive and fluent modernism. What once looked eccentric now seems pioneering; what once seemed self-indulgent now looks extraordinarily disciplined.

Lautner was raised in Marquette, Michigan, on the wooded shores of Lake Superior. His father was a professor of humanities,

steeped in German Idealist philosophy. His mother was a painter with a wide interest in mystical and mythical views of nature and the universe, from Nordic folk beliefs to Sufi and Sanskrit poetry. Determined to raise their only son as a student both of "Nature" and of Idealist philosophy, they built a boldly austere wooden city house (*Keepsake*) for John to be born in. Unpainted, meeting the land without a threshold, the house was designed to educate Lautner to the virtues of simplicity, ground him in pioneer and Pilgrim traditions and surround him – beneath a gigantic sheltering roof – with symbolic furnishings and murals and the literature of aesthetics and ideas that would excite an original imagination. With *Midgaard* (1923–28), the summer cabin the family built together in the mid 1920s, the relationship of child to nature, and of nature to design, intensified. Lautner claimed that his boyhood experience building it – winching logs up from the shore, battenning them together for its roof, truing his lines with the lake's horizon – taught him "all I ever needed to know about architecture." Drawing on Norwegian folk beliefs for its argument, Norse architecture for its design and decorated to suggest a transcendental relationship with the sky and stars, *Midgaard* was, for Lautner's mother, "the rainbow bridge between earth and heaven."

For Lautner, these childhood horizons, both natural and philosophical, led to a persistent fascination with the forms and auras

Above John Lautner at age fifteen, laying the roof of the family's summer cabin, *Midgaard*, on Lake Superior in Marquette, Michigan, a task he later said "taught me all I ever needed to know about architecture."

Opposite *Marbrisa* in Acapulco, Mexico, 1973. The swimming pool of this villa curves around the edge of the terrace, "dissolving the confines," so that the great outdoor living room seems to hover in space somewhere between sea, sky and solid ground.



John Launer Archive, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, LA. © The John Launer Foundation.

of the earth and its elements, "the sense of the whole" that can be perceived in a deep reading of the world around us. Fascinated from the start with color photography and film, he used the camera to probe the natural world more deeply, locating in its least tangible elements — clouds, ice floes, boulders, the mouths of caves, sheets of rock and water — the central relationships explored in his work: between stillness and motion, vista and shelter, solidity and evanescence, the rhythms of shaped space and the elemental form and pulse of the universe at large.

As a result, unlike the systematic and analytical process prevailing among European-trained modernists of the postwar era or their American adherents, Lautner's spatial and structural thinking represented a modernism not built from logic but imagined of instinct and spirit. Drawing on the kind of sensibility developed by the Froebel kindergarten gifts — objects that presented archetypal concepts like symmetry and encouraged free, imaginative play — and on the Romantic primacy of instinct over reason, Lautner saw shapes and structures as an overarching whole, rather than an assembly. All Lautner's adventures in structure, line, siting and materials start from there. They derived not from a quest for effect but from a search to reach the poetry of the everyday. They are grounded in his belief that any building could, through

conversation with its setting, awaken emotional and sensory forces toward a transcendental understanding of its environment.

Lautner's long apprenticeship with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin in rural Wisconsin built his growing sense that architecture, as at Keepsake and Midgaard, could "grow the soul." But Wright and Lautner — though one saw the other as his heir — were different. Where Mies van der Rohe and Wright, like carpenters or like children with building blocks, depended on the repetition of a ruling unit to govern a composition, Lautner approached buildings as a sculptor, like Hans Arp or Constantin Brancusi, imagining shapes and the space around them already complete. Devoid of reference to precedents or rules, eschewing all the conventions of the module, something revolutionary and distinctively American emerged: buildings shaped sinuously and uniquely to fit the felt logic of their circumstances, and growing from them, as he said, "like forms of nature." These chambers of voids, either bounded by sweeping forms or breaking out of their containers altogether, seek an architecture in which the sublime becomes familiar and the familiar is made sublime.

Wright's Taliesin community for most of Lautner's time there was working on two fronts: the small single-family dwelling and the Broadacre plan for a city dispersed into the landscape on

Below Carling Residence in Los Angeles, 1947. By suspending the roof from three steel pylons, Lautner eliminated all supporting walls and interior structure, freeing up the plan so completely that an entire section of the living room can swing out to embrace the poolside patio.



John Lautner Archive, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, LA. © The John Lautner Foundation. Photo by Donald Higgins.

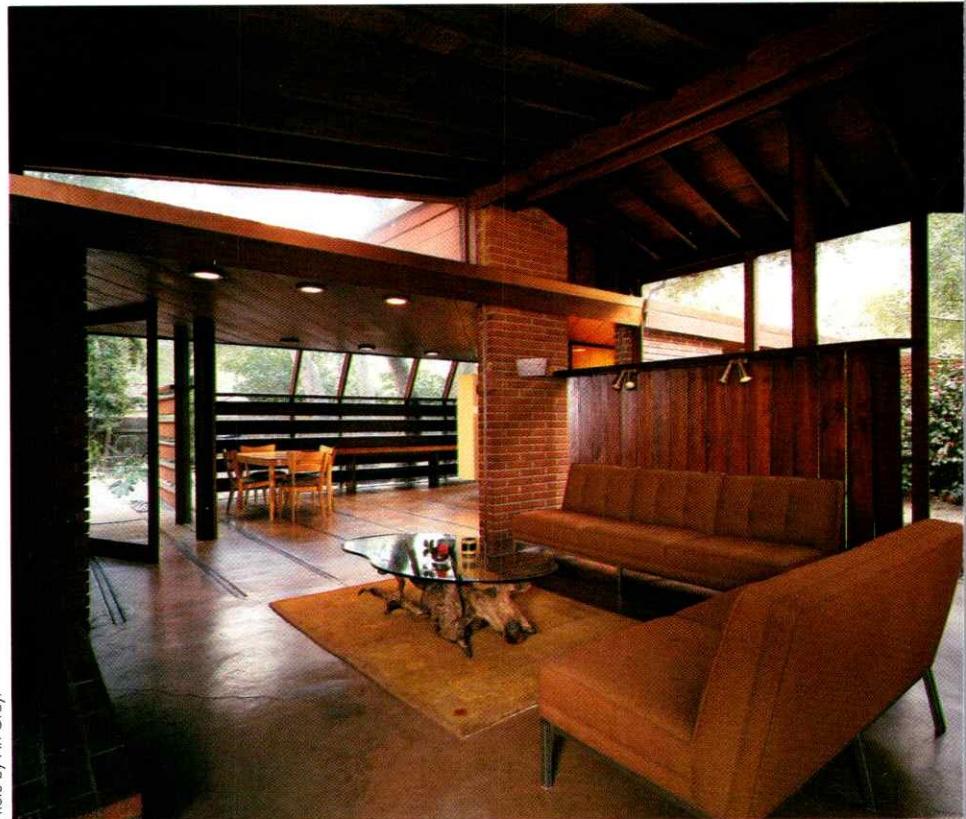
Photo by Art Gray.



what Wright called "the horizontal line of freedom." Describing his own prototype of a house for Broadacre in 1935, Lautner enunciated this "Democratic Vista," the feeling of freedom that should imbue American architecture, and with it a program for the career to come: "The house unfolds out of the hills into a rhythmic light, free space.... The living room roof and ceiling pitches up, like one's eyelash under a visor to the sky, leaving nothing but glass between you and the view.... At night you see the moon and stars instead of the walls of the room.... In the morning the sun comes all the way to the heart of the house to wake you."

Lautner was as concerned with the modest home or the roadside diner as with the luxury retreat, seeking in every project the same generous "feeling of freedom." As his work evolved, this led to an increasingly radical sense of continuity between the space he built and the world around it, and to a revolutionary fluency in how space was shaped. Indeed, Lautner's first independent projects, completed immediately after his move to Los Angeles in 1938, were widely published as a model for the free-flowing open plan house of the future and, with the end of the war, he could begin to look at structural solutions that could liberate the space of the dwelling even more. The Carling House (1947) shows him reaching for an absolute continuity between interior spaces and between inside and out — in this case extending the logic so that an entire

Photo by Art Gray.



Above and top Schaffer Residence, Montrose, California, 1949. The house wanders between the oaks on its valley site, using the simplest means — unmullioned glass and spaced boards — to emphasize its horizontal lines, bringing light in, pushing the gaze outwards and setting up a structural logic that reads the same way inside as out.

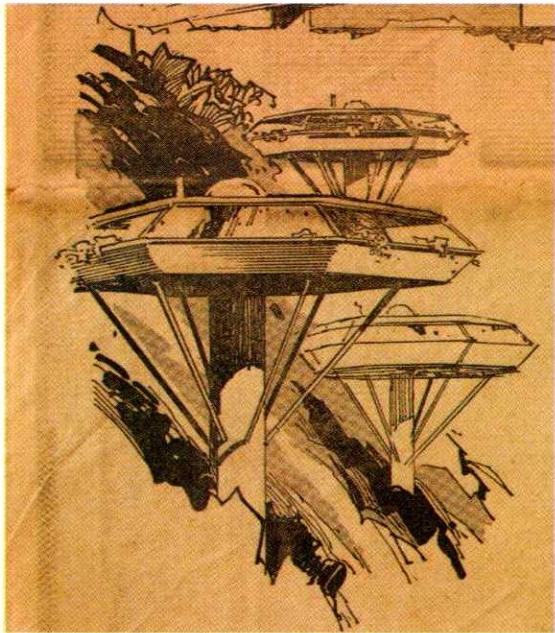


Photo by Joshua White.

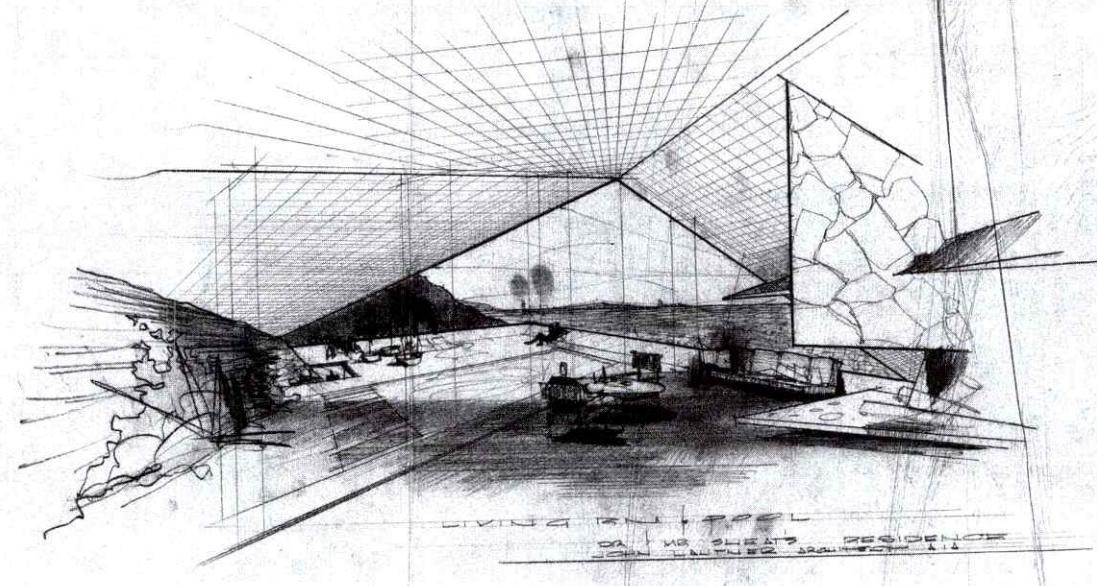
Top Chemosphere (Malin Residence), Los Angeles, 1960. Mocked as a Space Age fantasy, the use of a supporting pole and funicular was a brilliantly practical way to build an open plan on a steep site, and to release it from the shadows and limited viewpoints that would otherwise be dictated by the slope behind.

Above Chemosphere was developed as a prototype for the standard family "house of 1975." A line engraving after a drawing by Leavitt Dudley, in the March 11, 1962, *Los Angeles Times* shows how repeated versions might have formed a suburban landscape with minimal infrastructural impact on the environment.

wall, with its built-in seating, can be swung out into the open air. Applying ideas and materials from the aerospace industry, Lautner focused on loosening space by suspending roofs from posts or supporting them on trusses so that the supporting wall could be abandoned. With this, the house could now be shaped in totally original ways to fit its outlook or the habits of its owner, or to adapt to the exigencies and the geometries of its site.

As commissions took him into more spacious landscapes, Lautner focused on the experience of nature, echoing features of the topography to enhance a building's relationship to its site, taming the vistas of these wilder sites and providing a feeling of stillness and shelter within them. For the Schaffer House (1949), amid an oak grove in suburban Montrose, a group of connected pavilions of redwood board and unmullioned glass settles under the trees, like a campground wandering through the woods. This radical use of routine materials domesticates the site: the long slats of wood mark out horizontal lines, while the strips of continuous sloping glass, capturing and refracting the sky, seem to stretch those angles out to the invisible edge of the woods.

The Pearlman Cabin (1956) is a weekend house designed for listening to music against the alpine landscape. The lot, offering only a narrow shelf of sloping land before hitting a gigantic boulder and falling steeply into the wooded canyon, presented a massive challenge. For an entire day, Lautner sat on the great rock, imagining a lightweight open cylinder taking shape around him: a circular platform for a floor, floating just above the boulder; a flat gray disk of a roof dropping gently over it; stripped tree trunks forming giant supporting posts; part of a sunburst, in a zigzag mitered wall of glass open to the view; and much of a moon, in a curving cave-like wall, set against the hillside and ending at a focal hearth. The deep facets of the window wall break up reflections inside to make the boundary between home and wilderness almost imperceptible, while the dark, cement-plastered wall behind serves, like a strong sheltering arm, to circle one's shoulder as one leans toward the view. The result is a tiny retreat whose spaciousness is forged



by its continuity with the terrain, and which uses the play between open and closed, shelter and vista, angularity and curve, to cause light to dance through it, like sunshine traversing a clearing in the woods or notes tumbling off the strings of a violin.

Lautner's most famous work, Chemosphere (1960), shapes another drum but releases itself from the topography altogether to settle on a pole. This was Lautner's most ambitious attempt at demonstrating a repeatable standardized dwelling system, and it was heralded or scorned as a Space Age form in the press worldwide. In fact, Chemosphere was not only a reasonable solution to working on a 45-degree slope. It was also a workable economic model for the efficient living capsule of the future. Its focus on vista and enclosure moved far beyond the mechanistic visions of the "House of Tomorrow" that were appearing so widely to propose a more sympathetic relationship with the natural environment and a warmer domestic palette and language.

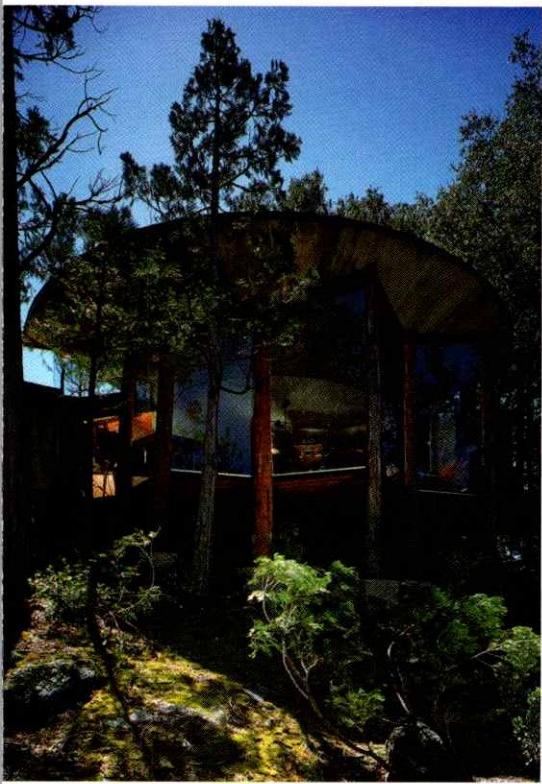
From the late '50s, Lautner began to discover the poetry of concrete, a material that could "express structure," shifting its tones with changing light, carrying fluent lines, making space sinuous and yet conveying permanence and solidity. Concrete thus suggested how the house, in whatever material, might become an essay in shaping vistas. Both the scale of Lautner's work and the scope of his

conversation with nature expanded, as he moved his built forms into a dialogue with the sky, approaching them with cascading ramps, bordering them with an infinity pool, and shaping them with colliding catenary and parabolic curves, or with overlapping angles that stretch out to geometries that are never closed. At the Sheats House (1963), in concrete folded as sharply as origami, Lautner sliced a shelf on a Bel Air hill so that the house could rest on it, draping an elbow over the side and opening a gigantic mouth toward the distant horizon with its shimmering sense of the sea.

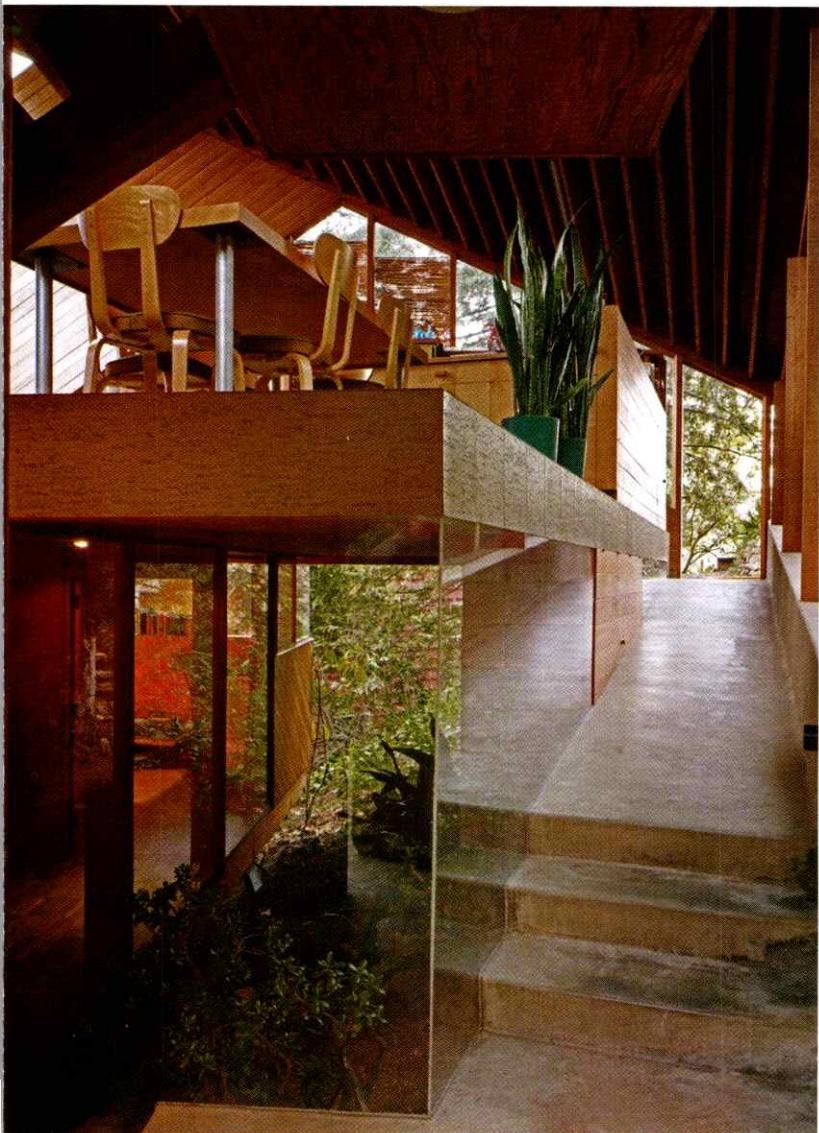
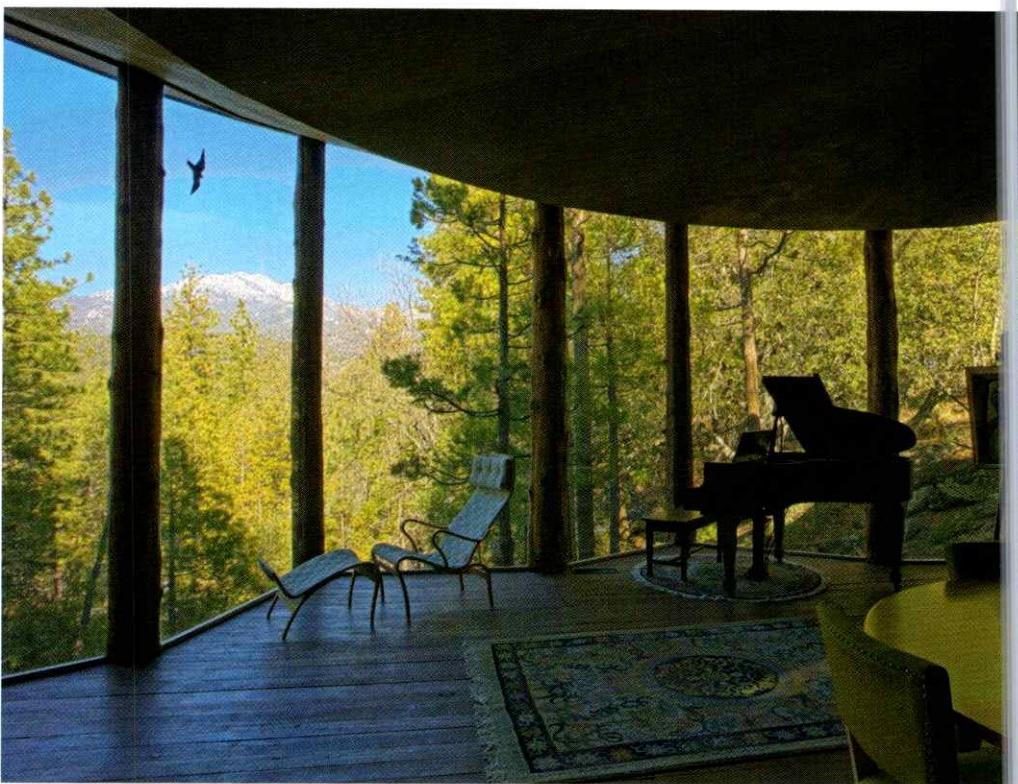
In Los Angeles, wilderness and city, slope and flatland, sublime horizons and banal streetscapes constantly collide. Lautner focused increasingly on the feeling of continuity enabled by extension into the natural site, geometric lines that seem to stretch into the topography, natural elements that are drawn into the structure, or — as in the Walstrom House (1969) — by carrying patterns of movement through built space into the surrounding natural environment. In this modest two-bedroom house on a steep slope, Lautner chose to build "in timber away from the mountainside." The wooden frame rests on a concrete foundation at street level and on two anchor beams that slope into the hillside, allowing him to eliminate all retaining walls and leave a vertical clear space inside. By subtly twisting the diagonal geometries of wood and glass enclosing the

Top Sheats Residence, Los Angeles, 1963. A Lautner rendering of the sitting room shows how the sloping geometries of the vaulted roof, the pool and the gently rising edges of the patio — all in concrete — provide a sense of shelter from which to focus on the void, enjoying a vista that stretches to the horizon, and a complementary geometry of built space to help read it.

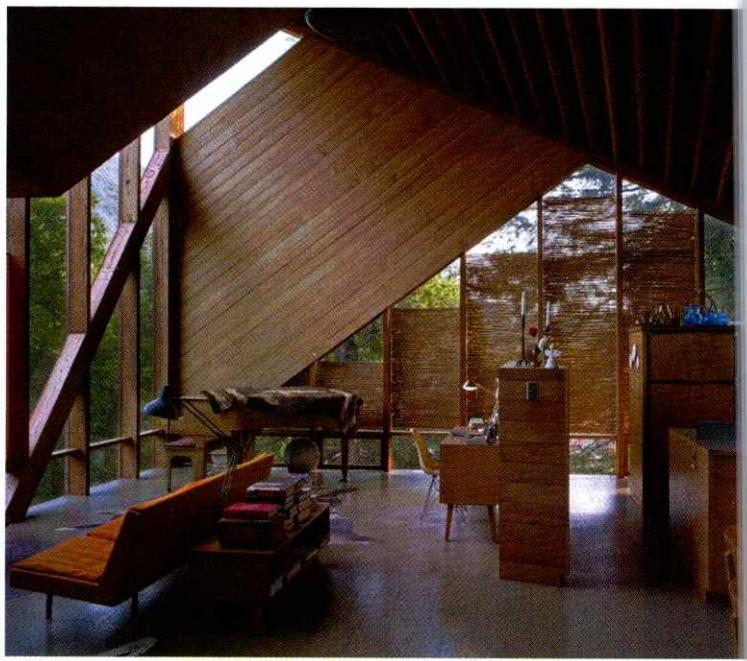
Above Turner Residence, Aspen, Colorado, 1982. In many of his late works, Lautner drew on the shapes of mounds, snowdrifts, wave-forms, caves, shells and boulders to mold spaces into a single sheltering form, its geometries often buried deep in the ground, and its roof and walls flowing together in a continuous surface. Here the effect is like that of a concrete eyelid framing a gigantic panorama.



Left: Photo by Juergen Nogai; Right: Photo by Joshua White.



Photos by Joshua White.



Above left and right The Walstrom Residence (1969) in Los Angeles, stands just away from a near vertical hillside. Like the Schaffer residence 20 years before, it uses the monochromatics of wood and glass to intensify the awareness both of its own geometries and of light and vegetation outside. Each stage in its rise upward through the landscape is evident at every step and turn as one moves through the house.

Top left and right Pearlman Cabin (Idyllwild, California), 1957. With the jagged glass edge cut into the solid little drum that shelters this weekend retreat and the lowered disk of the ceiling, Lautner seems to float the living space outward, like a platform emerging from a cave, into the forest beyond. Shaved tree trunks support the roof and shape the glass sheets into a serrated wall, shifting the way light falls inside, repelling glare and uniting the dwelling with the woodland into which it settles.

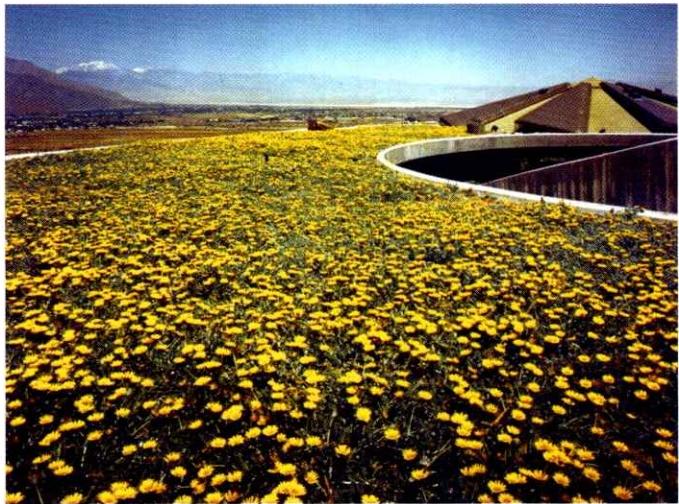


living floor, intimacy and vitality are added to the grandeur of the great open space, and its tilted ceiling disappears.

In the late 1960s, Lautner began to speak both of "drawing in" the elemental forces of the site — the geology of rocks, the geometries of topology, the geography of views and skies — and of shaping the building so that it "radiates" toward these forces. Ever freer forms emerged from this dramatic conversation between space within and space without. For Arthur Elrod, on a rocky spur above Palm Springs in 1968, Lautner excavated the lot eight feet into the boulders and sand, and used the geology thus revealed as part of the structure. The main space is sheltered by a huge circular roof of tilted concrete whose great blades rest on a concrete ring supported on a few slender metal posts. The result, as Lautner described it, is a sky-lit dome "with light slots for freedom and panorama, leaving the ceiling as a precise reflection of the roof above it." Lautner darkened the floor so that the view of the mountainside through the window wall, especially at dusk and dawn, would glow like a movie.

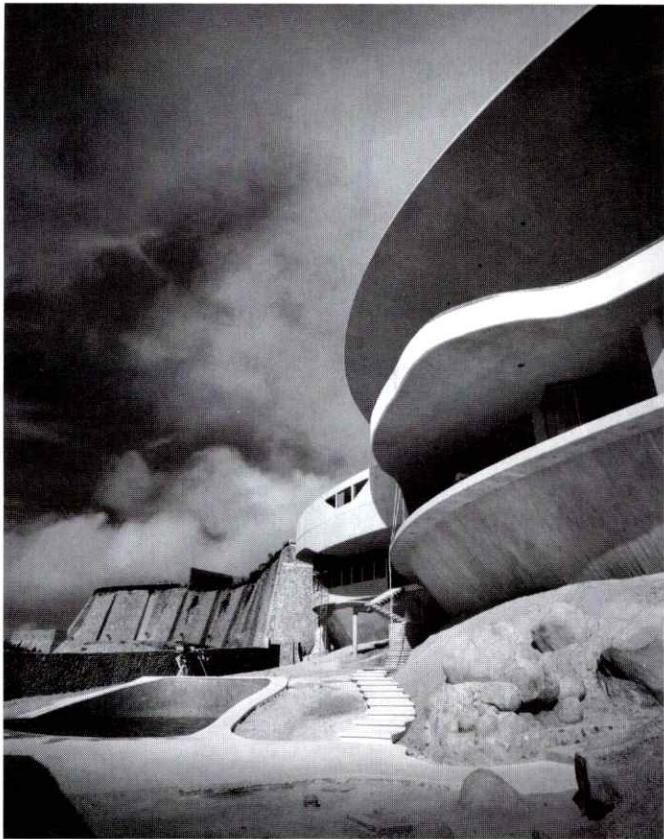
Perched high above the sea, the Marbrisa villa in Acapulco (1973) brilliantly expresses Lautner's feeling for structural continuity and spatial flow, and his faith in the capacity of concrete to reconcile freedom and flux with a sense of solidity and repose. The villa is a small portion of an inverted cone, whose structural rings are anchored against the cliff, but the main living space is an open deck. Bordered by a swimming channel and spilling out at its ocean side to a molded edge, this platform takes on an increasingly irregular form as it stretches out toward the sea. A vast flying canopy curves upwards to draw the breezes, shield the tropical sun and meet the sky. Pathways

John Lautner Archive, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, LA.
© The John Lautner Foundation. Photo by Island Lee.



Top Elrod Residence, Palm Springs, California, 1968. The site was bulldozed at one side so that the circular living room could sit within the rocks, which form part of its wall, and open to the cool northeast. The dark floor is set under a vast domed roof, slatted like a propeller to bring in only narrow shafts of light and shade the desert sun. As with all Lautner's mature work, the roof reveals the main elements of its structure.

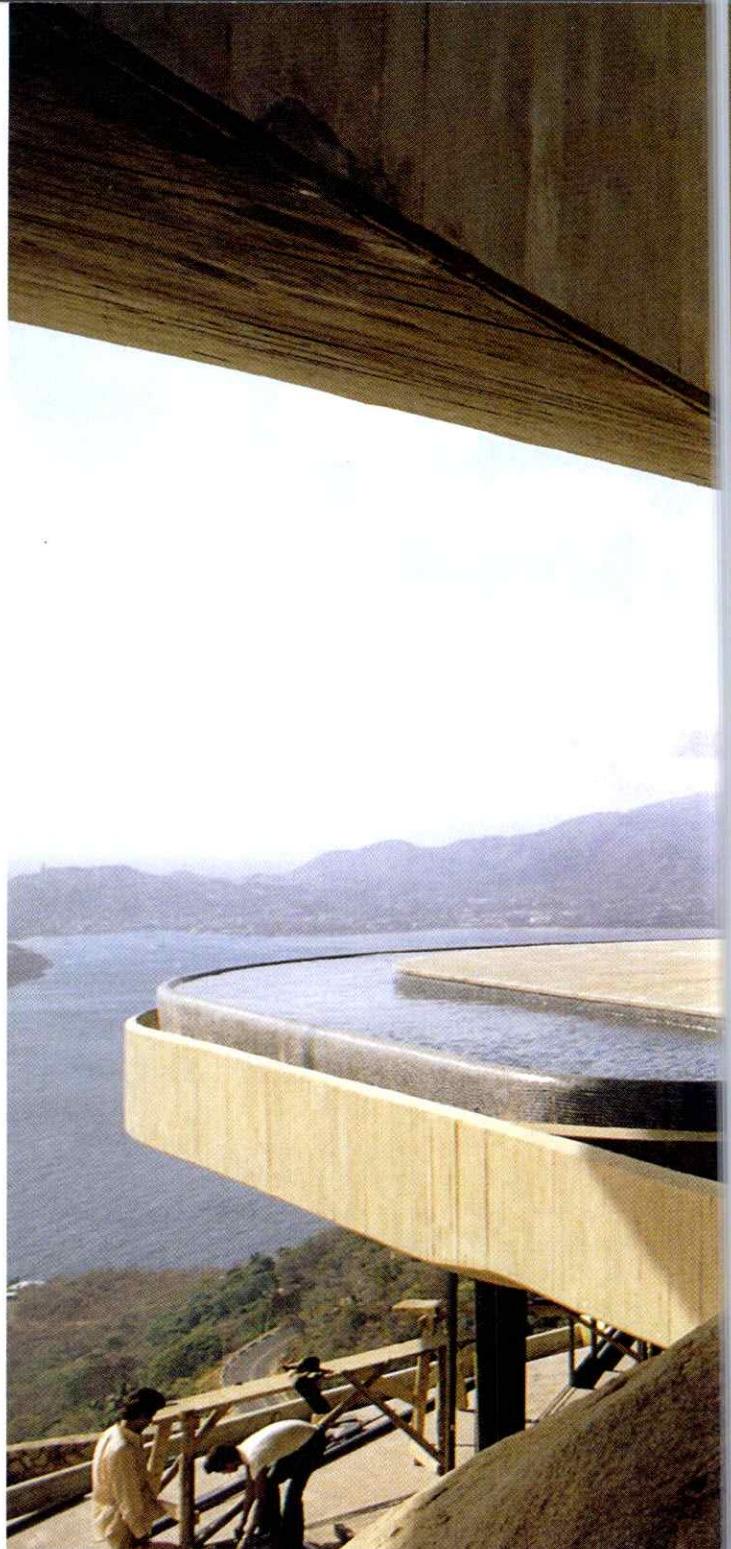
Above Lautner spoke of the Elrod House "radiating" into its landscape. Since it was visible from the road and hill above, the great sweep of roof above the garage and bedroom was landscaped, both to echo the view beyond it and to allow the dome of the living room to rise from it like a rock in the desert landscape.



Above and right Lautner delighted in the qualities of poured concrete, calling it a material that "can suggest continuous, even disappearing space, ... something solid, yet free." At Marbrisa (1973), in Acapulco, it takes on the sinuous shapes of the clouds above and the bay below, making apparent Lautner's idea that a building can be the meeting point between substance and incandescence; can shape an awareness of transcendence.

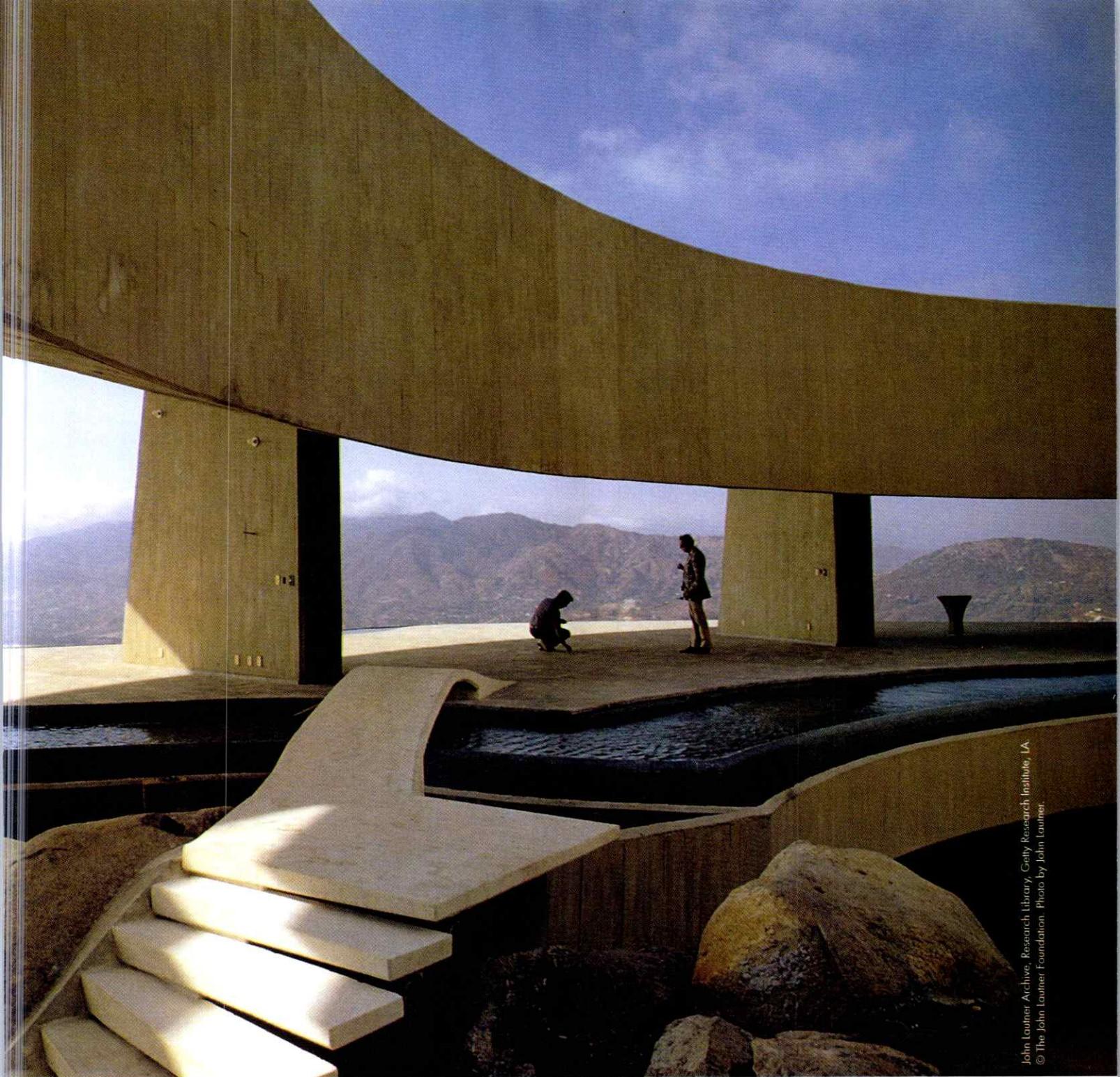
and bridges wander; the concrete cover rises and falls. This shaping of the space appears almost accidental, but in fact manages a complicated set of relationships to views, structure, sunlight, moonlight, cooling breezes, privacy and topography with extraordinary precision. As a result, the commanding vistas stay true, drawing the eye and senses out from shelter toward the diaphanous light and vague geometries of the distant tropical seascape.

After seeing Marbrisa complete, Lautner believed that the house had liquefied its own boundaries, leaving the visitor both settled in place and transported into a "disappearing space." That idea now led Lautner to explore the transcendent illusion of being freed from the structure one is within to inhabit the spaces beyond it. Exploring the contradictory psychology of enclosure and release, Lautner, in his last works, abandoned all distinctions between roof, wall and foundation to mold spaces like caves, shells or hollowed boulders, seeking the sense a dancer has of being simultaneously on the ground and in flight. "A snowdrift in winter and a grass mound in summer," the Turner House (1982), in Aspen, Colorado, wrote Lautner, is "simply a concrete roof in the form of a small segment of a sphere." That roof is carried far below ground, where its three point loads are tied together with concrete beams, so that the whole structure is braced from beneath. When the turf-clad roof is seen from a distance, the house appears to be a sliver of a gigantic underground sphere, breaking through the undulating crust of an alpine meadow to look



up to the sheer face of the mountains. Lautner used the sloping ground to bring one into the house from the back, and then steeply up between curving walls into a panoramic living space that seems to swallow the light around it. The sense of emergence leaves the visitor feeling like a butterfly poised to fly from its chrysalis, capturing that balancing point between shelter and vista that is Lautner's "middle ground": the transcendent bridge between earth and heaven that marked Midgaard.

Like all of his late work, the Turner House reminds us that Lautner's is rarely an architecture to look at. It is instead architecture to look out from, or to join with in its conversation with



John Lautner Archive, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, LA.
© The John Lautner Foundation. Photo by John Lautner.

the landscape; to rest and move in, slowly embracing Lautner's dissolving horizons to grasp the fundamental idea of architecture as he saw it: a plastic and revelatory art that can extend the senses into a new and heightened awareness of the ever changing universe about us. ■

Nicholas Olsberg was chief curator and director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. He has written about the architecture of Los Angeles, the cultural roles of architecture, design and urbanism in modern society, and the architectural work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Carlo Scarpa, Arthur Erickson and others.

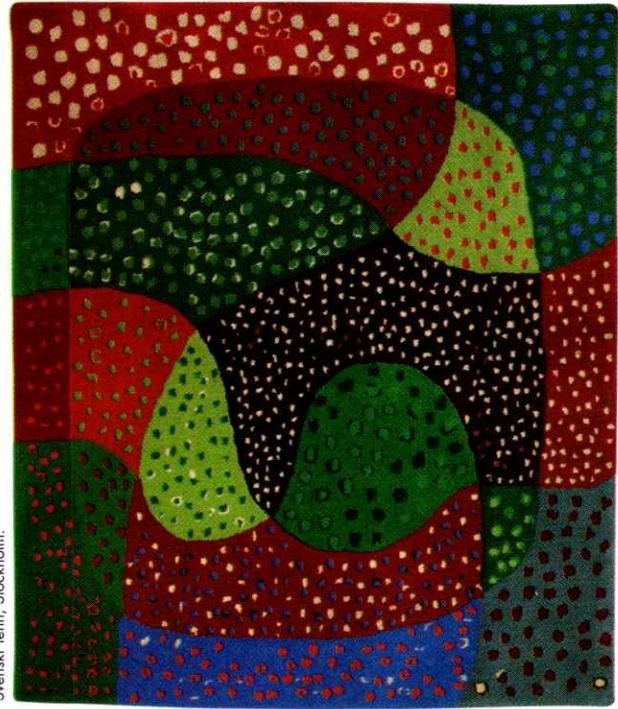
The Hammer Museum (www.hammer.ucla.edu) in Los Angeles presents "Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner," the first major exhibition on the architect, from July 13 through October 12, curated by Nicholas Olsberg and Frank Escher. This article developed out of an essay in the accompanying catalogue, published by Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., which also includes pieces by Escher and Jean-Louis Cohen.

Josef Frank Making Swedish Modern

By Christopher Long



Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.



Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.

Above An example of Frank's carpets for Svenskt Tenn, designed in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The vibrant and playful free-form designs opened new possibilities for modernism.

Top One of Frank's many candelabras for Svenskt Tenn. The silver surface and curving base summarized his attempts to create designs that were both elegant and novel.

Opposite top Frank's Svenskt Tenn display at the 1939 New York World's Fair, including his kidney-shaped desk. The room was one of the first examples of Swedish Modern design in the United States.

Opposite bottom Glass vitrine for Svenskt Tenn, Model 2077, designed in 1946. A characteristic example of Frank's use of a traditional form, which has been refined and attenuated.

One of the most remarkable displays at the 1939 New York World's Fair was a small space in the Swedish pavilion. It featured an array of furnishings and other decorative objects produced by the Svenskt Tenn company in Stockholm, at the time one of the leading outlets for new design in Scandinavia. The clean lines and bright colors captivated visitors, many of whom realized that they were witnessing something entirely new: a design idiom that was modern and up-to-date, yet also comfortable, relaxed and unpretentious.

Swedish Modern design had first come to international notice two years before, at the Paris Exposition Internationale. Almost overnight, American manufacturers, from Conant-Ball and Dunbar to Heywood-Wakefield and the Michigan Seating Company, picked up the new aesthetic and began offering their own "Swedish Modern" pieces. Within a short time, the look of Swedish Modern had spread across the country, and articles appeared in most of the country's leading popular home magazines offering advice on how to reproduce the look. The idea of a "mitigated" modernism would in fact continue for some years, influencing American design well into the 1960s.

What few Americans knew at the time was that the new style was not the creation of a native Swedish designer, but the Viennese-born Josef Frank, who had moved to Stockholm only a few years before. Frank had begun to develop the principles of his revolutionary aesthetic more than a decade and half earlier, and he had brought the basic ideas with him when he arrived in 1933 to become the chief designer at Svenskt Tenn. Although he would develop and refine his ideas over the next 20 years, the seeds of Swedish Modern had been planted in far off Central Europe.

Josef Frank was born in 1885, the son of a well-to-do Viennese industrialist and textile wholesaler. He had studied architecture at the Vienna Polytechnic Institute, receiving his degree in 1910. In the years just prior to World War I, he formed a partnership with two other recent graduates, Oskar Strnad and Oskar Wlach. The three architects specialized in single-family houses and interiors, drawing on both the English Arts and Crafts movement and the contemporary Viennese Secessionist style.

After the war, Frank continued his partnership with Wlach, designing housing projects for the Vienna municipal authorities and a handful of private villas. The focus of Frank's efforts, however, moved increasingly toward interior design. In 1925, he and Wlach set up a home furnishings company, Haus & Garten (House and Garden), modeled on Morris and Company, William Morris's shop in London and Josef Hoffmann's Wiener Werkstätte.

Founded in 1861, Morris and Company was the first retail store for modern



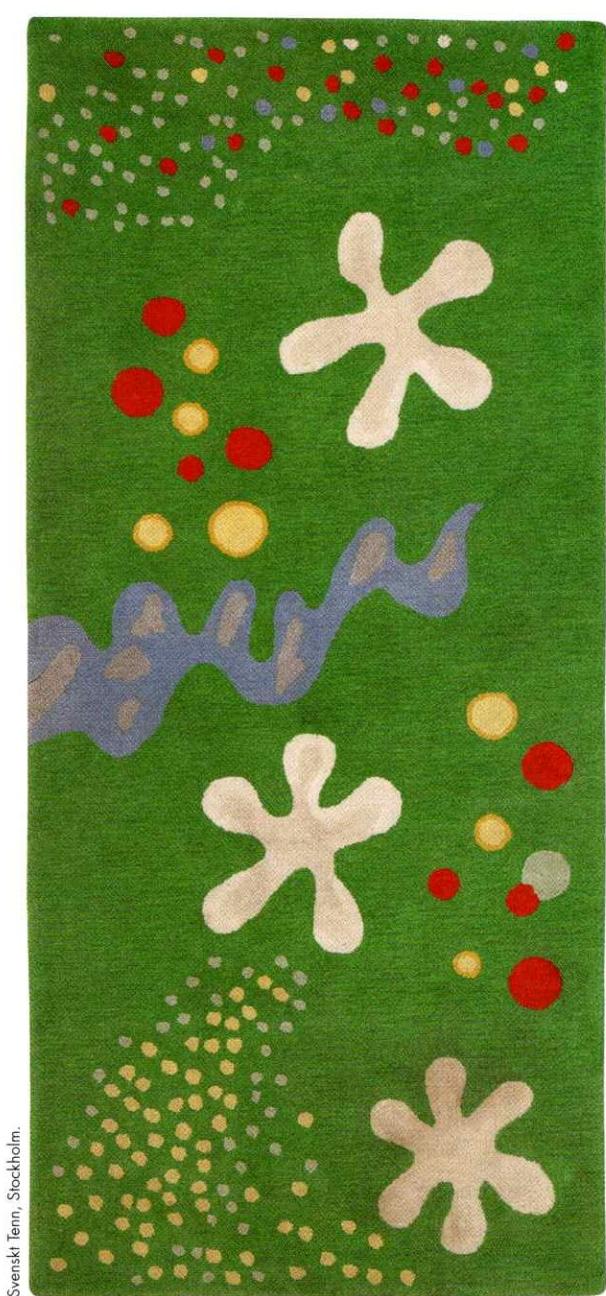
Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.

design. It featured Morris and his partners' designs for carefully crafted, simple, and straightforward furniture, textiles, and other decorative art objects. The Wiener Werkstätte (Viennese Workshop), which Hoffmann and others established in 1903, offered elegant, hand-made furniture and accessories in the newest Jugendstil idiom. Frank's underlying philosophy for Haus & Garten, however, was different from that of either Morris or Hoffmann. Although he and Wlach insisted on the highest standards of craftsmanship, they rejected Morris's emphasis on medieval styles and Hoffmann's insistence on matched "suites" furniture; instead, they produced modern furniture and encouraged their clients to choose and match pieces at will, and to arrange them piece-meal in their rooms. But Frank also rejected the hard-edged geometric forms of the Bauhaus and other radical designers, specifying softened contours and ergonomic forms. "A modern living space," he wrote in the early 1930s, "is not an art work, it is neither conspicuous, nor effective, nor exciting." Rather, "it is comfortable, without one being able to say why, and the less reason that one can provide, the better it is."

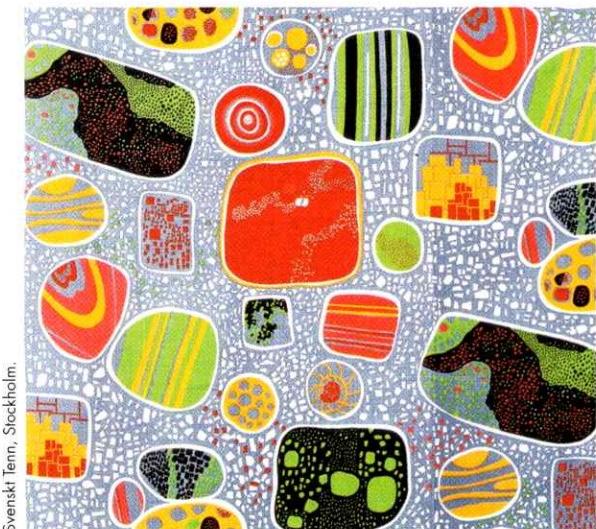
Frank's many designs for Haus & Garten included sofas, chairs, tables, beds and desks, as well as lamps, pillows and printed textiles. The last were particularly important for Frank; he was convinced that brightly colored curtains and upholstery would foster a feeling of hominess and interest in modern spaces and domesticate what would otherwise be cold and unappealing rooms. His insistence on doing so brought the ire of many of his modernist contemporaries. When Frank installed a striking array of such fabrics in the interior of his house at the 1927 Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart, an exhibition of modern houses and interiors overseen by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, he was sharply criticized. (One Dutch architect referred to the spaces mockingly as "Frank's bordello.") But Frank remained undaunted, and throughout the later 1920s and



Bukowskis, Stockholm.



Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.



Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.

early 1930s, he continued to investigate the possibilities of his colorful and comfortable aesthetic.

Frank's interiors of the early 1930s for Haus & Garten directly presage the imagery of Swedish Modern. A sitting corner he designed not long before he left Austria evinces all the basic features of his mature idiom: simple, low-slung furnishings with softened edges, an emphasis on ease and physical solace and bright and boldly patterned textiles.

The rise of the Nazis in Germany and growing anti-Semitism in Austria (as well as the threat of a German takeover) prompted Frank's move to Stockholm. Sweden was a logical place of refuge for him; his wife Anna was Swedish, and they often spent the summer months there. More important for his decision, however, was an offer from Estrid Ericson, the owner of Svenskt Tenn, to redesign the interiors of her shop.

Ericson had founded Svenskt Tenn in 1924. The shop originally featured pewter articles (its name means Swedish pewter), but by the beginning of the 1930s she had branched out to include furniture and other accessories. Hoping to broaden the store's offerings, she wrote to Frank, whose work she had long admired, and asked him to contribute some designs. After Frank arrived in Stockholm, she was so taken with his work that she hired him to become Svenskt Tenn's chief designer. Over the next 25 years, Frank would design literally thousands of articles for the company, producing, on average, one new design per week.

Though his basic design philosophy remained unchanged, Frank's work in Sweden underwent a subtle but discernible transformation. With Ericson's encouragement, he began to put greater stress on finish and elegance. He also introduced elements of Swedish folk art and other historic traditions. His color palette of deep rich reds, blues and greens grew brighter — a response to Scandinavia's dark, dreary winters — and more insistent.

Several exhibitions Frank mounted shortly after his arrival caused an immediate stir in Swedish design circles. Most of the Swedish design vanguard up to that time had followed German and Dutch trends, but Frank's sensitive melding of Swedish patterns and forms — simple geometric ornament and light wooden design of birch and pine — with his subdued modernism struck many as an ideal alternative to the more radical language of German functionalism, and soon a number of Swedish designers, including Carl Malmsten and Gustav Axel Berg, adopted a similar aesthetic.

The appeal and success of Swedish Modern rested precisely with its ability to foster an acceptable face for modern design. The designs of Frank and the other Swedes evoked for many an immediate sense of familiarity, even when the forms of their pieces were entirely new. What separated Frank from much of the rest of the Swedish design establishment was his continuing emphasis on quality and expensive materials. By the end of the 1930s, most of the Swedish designers were promoting less costly woods and mass manufacturing as a way to make the new aesthetic affordable for all. Frank, though he was sympathetic to such ideas, continued to shun modern methods of production, preferring instead old-fashioned craftsmanship. Part of the reason went back to his interest in the Arts and Crafts movement and his belief in the importance of preserving handicraft in the machine age. But there were also more practical reasons for his decision: most of Svenskt Tenn's clientele came from Stockholm's wealthy elite and Ericson had no desire to alter the shop's business model. Eventually, in the 1960s, Ingvar Kamprad, founder of IKEA, would take the final step and make Swedish Modern design a worldwide phenomenon. But Frank was content to develop and expand his formal vocabulary while relying on traditional ideas of luxury.

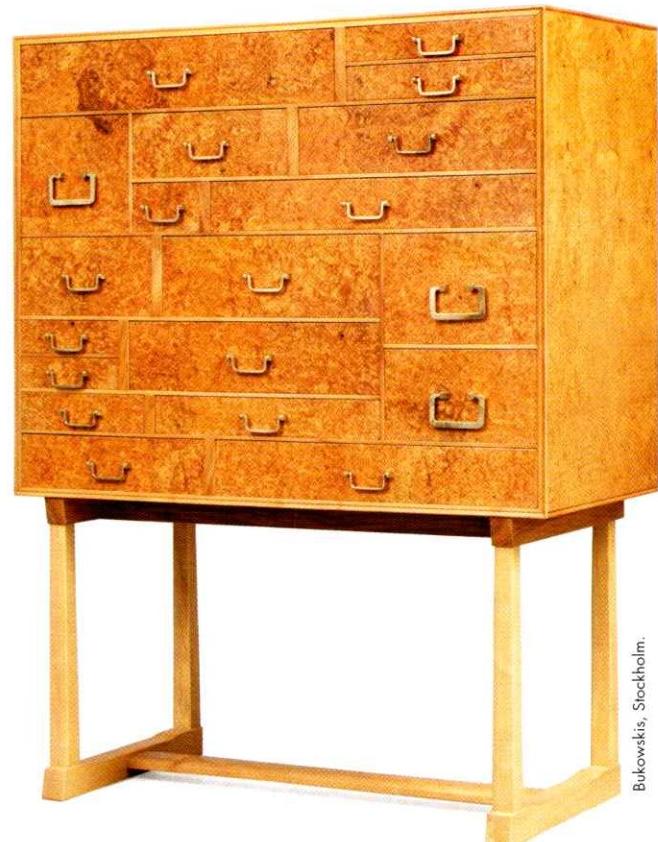
In key ways, Frank's work for Svenskt Tenn also departed from the modernist mainstream. In contrast to most of his contemporaries, he did not believe that designers had to spurn all past forms, only those "that

were no longer living." When creating a new piece, he often began by considering how a particular type — chairs, for example — had been made before, and which of their elements might still be "usable." Sometimes this would take the form of a particular detail — Frank was fond using of 18th-century English hardware; sometimes he would adapt an entire piece, like his recasting of one of the Egyptian stools found in Tutankhamen's tomb, which Frank considered an example of perfect design. He combined these still viable features with new components, producing works that were inherently new while retaining some of the qualities of fine historical pieces. Frank was particularly interested in maintaining the feel of antique surfaces. Though he was dedicated to producing "modern" designs, he remained wary of employing some new materials. He rejected tubular steel (then a popular material for modern chairs and tables), for example, because he thought it lacked the sensuous and warm touch of fine wood.

Such considerations did not prevent him from experimenting with radical new forms. Throughout his three decades in Sweden, Frank continued to mine both the past and the present for ideas. But he also generated many entirely novel designs. He did so in some cases through attenuation or reduction (using very thin members was a staple in the modernist vocabulary), but he also investigated complex "organic" forms and rounded contours.

In the late 1930s, around the time of the New York World's Fair, Frank's work began to evince marked changes. For one, he started experimenting with free-form and abstract designs, especially for carpets. He also started to employ non-orthogonal shapes, such as his design for the kidney-shaped desk in his Swedish Pavilion installation. Such forms, of course, would become common in the 1950s, but in the years before World War II, this was an entirely new idea.

Perhaps most important for Frank's evolving design language, however, was a series of textile designs he made in the early 1940s. Fearing that the Nazis might invade Sweden, he and his wife fled to New York in 1941, arriving not long after the Japanese bombing at Pearl Harbor. Frank taught evening courses on art and architecture at the New School for Social Research, but he spent much of his time designing lamps and textile patterns. Estrid Ericson, who was no longer able to import textiles



Bukowskis, Stockholm.

Above Cabinet-on-stand, Svenskt Tenn Model 881, designed in 1938. One of Frank's first experiments with random ordering.

Opposite top A carpet for Svenskt Tenn, late 1930s or early 1940s.

Opposite bottom Terrazzo textile pattern, c. 1944, based on illustrations of minerals from one of the pocket guides Frank bought in New York.



Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.

Above Josef Frank in the mid-1930s, around the time he settled in Sweden.

Collecting Josef Frank

In the years between his arrival in Sweden in 1934 and his death in 1967, Josef Frank produced more than 2,000 designs for Svenskt Tenn. The company is still in business today, operated as a non-profit. More than a hundred of Frank's designs are still in production, including many of his textile designs. They can be purchased at the company's shop at Strandvägen 5 in Stockholm or through its website: www.svenskttenn.se.

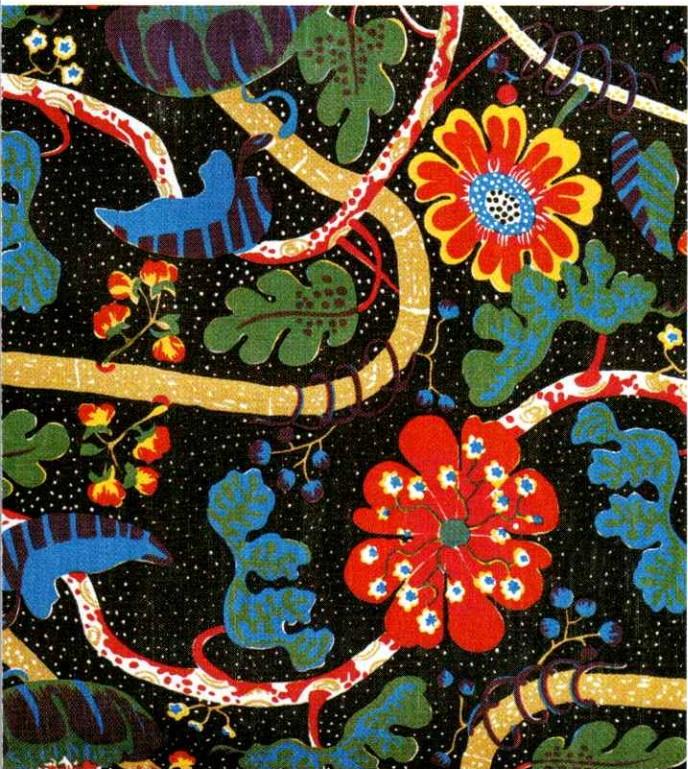
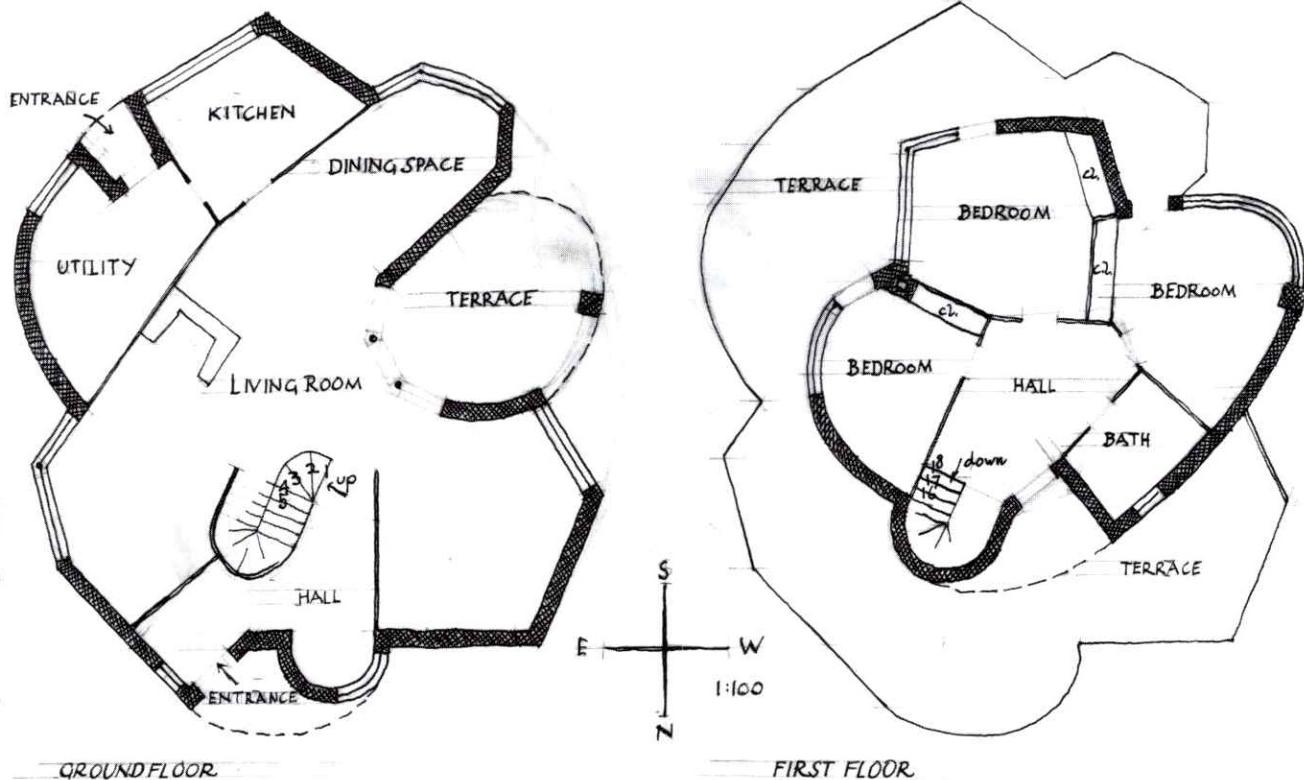
Frank's earlier designs often come up at auction in Europe and the United States. His later pieces or those that were produced in large numbers now fetch prices in the hundreds and low thousands. More important Frank designs, such as his early cabinets and sofas now sell for far more, some of the best



Bukowskis, Stockholm.

Above A blue glass and pewter box for Svenskt Tenn. Frank's later works for Svenskt Tenn often fused traditional materials with new forms.

for well over \$50,000. Frank's designs for Haus & Garten in Vienna are more rare and come on the market far less frequently. In recent auctions in Vienna, his Haus & Garten designs have sold for more than \$10,000.



Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.

Above Frank's *Mirakel* textile pattern. One of Frank's early designs for Haus & Garten, with which he sought to enliven his rooms.

Top House project for Dagmar Grill, c. 1953. Frank sought to translate the idea of "accidental" design to architecture, presaging the current interest in complex forms.

from England for Svenskt Tenn because of the German blockade, began to print some of Frank's earlier designs and asked him to produce others. By the end of 1945, he had churned out nearly 60 patterns. He based many of the designs, such as *Vegetable Tree* and *Terrazzo*, on illustrations from small inexpensive pocket guides to North American flora, fauna and minerals he had picked up in New York bookstores. In each case, Frank reconceived the natural forms, manipulating their scale, shapes and arrangement. The end result was a series of striking designs — bold, colorful, and strangely familiar, yet also modern. In the postwar years, Ericson had most of the patterns printed; they would become the most popular items at Svenskt Tenn, their sales far outstripping any of Frank's other designs.

During his time in New York, Frank made one further breakthrough. For some time, he had been thinking about devising an aesthetic based on random or chance ordering. As early as 1938, he had produced a design for a cabinet-on-stand with a seemingly haphazard arrangement of drawers. Around the same time, he also designed several houses with curving spaces or unusual polygonal rooms. In the mid 1940s, he began to develop a consistent theory for his new modus, which he would eventually call "Accidentism." In a manifesto he published in the Swedish journal *Form* in 1958, he defined his new style: "What we need is a much greater elasticity, not strict formal rules. Every human needs a certain degree of sentimentality to feel free. . . . What we need is variety and not stereotyped monumentality. No one feels comfortable in an order that has been forced upon him, even if it has been doused in a sauce of beauty. Therefore, what I suggest are not new rules and forms but a radically different attitude toward art. Away with universal styles, away with the equalization of art and industry, away with the whole system that has become popular under the name functionalism. This new architectural system . . . I would like to give a name in the manner that is currently fashionable. . . . I will call it Accidentism for the time being, and by that I mean that we should design our surroundings as if they originated by chance."

Frank was not the only one at the time advocating such ideas. Jackson Pollock and John Cage also sought an art of no-order, no-structure and no-control. But

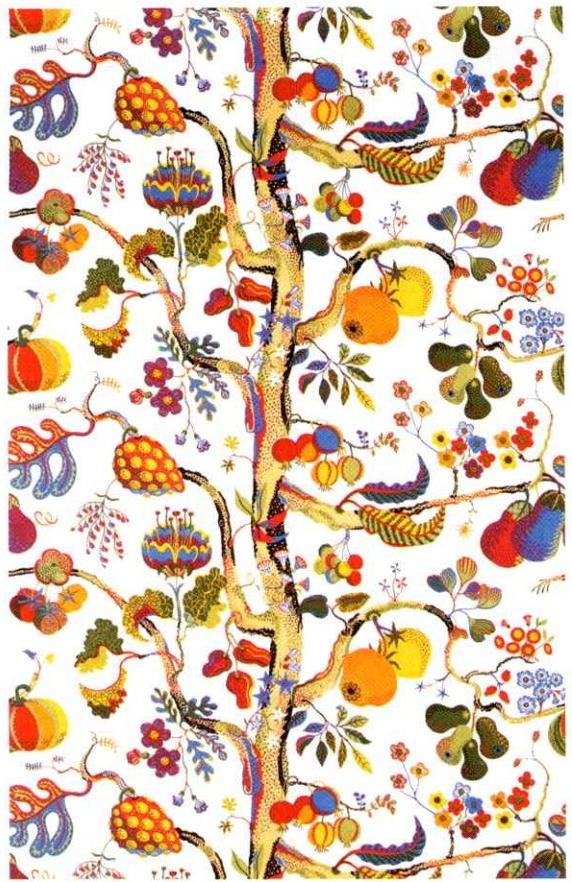
Frank never tried to rely fully on chance, as Cage did when he composed music using the *I Ching*. He merely attempted to impart the impression of disorder; in the end, his designs remain as rigorously controlled as any other modernist's work.

Nonetheless, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, Frank produced a number of designs for houses and other buildings based on his "Accidentist" principles. At their most extreme, they rejected all conventional notions of architectural ordering: Frank banished straight lines, opting instead for sensuous curves and free-form spaces, often superimposed upon each other in complex ways. The resultant designs, with their strident irregularities and oddly colored facades, flew in the face of modernist orthodoxy, offering a glimpse at a way of making architecture that has been adopted only in recent years by Frank Gehry and others. Few observers at the time had any sympathy or understanding for Frank's works and he failed to find any willing clients.

Frank's Accidental architecture, for all its odd mannerisms and insistent peculiarities, was a clear and consistent extension of his earlier design ideas for Svenskt Tenn: the belief in fostering an aesthetic that could appeal to both the mind and the senses. Frank's own version of Swedish Modern suggested a very different course for mid 20th-century design — away from regularity and the dictates of functionalism; away from a rejection of the historical past and the celebration of novelty for its own sake; away from machine forms and simple geometries. In his celebration of vitality and freedom in design and his conviction that design must serve those who use it, Frank helped to foster a new course for modernism, one that was affective and appealing; Swedish Modern continues to enjoy remarkable popularity around the world. At the same time, Frank charted a course for design that is coming more and more to the fore: an aesthetic of complexity and difficulty that is capable of expressing our own unsettled age. ■

Christopher Long teaches architecture and design history at the University of Texas at Austin. He has written widely on modernism, including *Josef Frank: Life and Work* and *Paul T. Frankl and Modern American Design*.

The author thanks Svenskt Tenn and Bukowskis, both of Stockholm, for graciously permitting the publication of photographs from their collections.



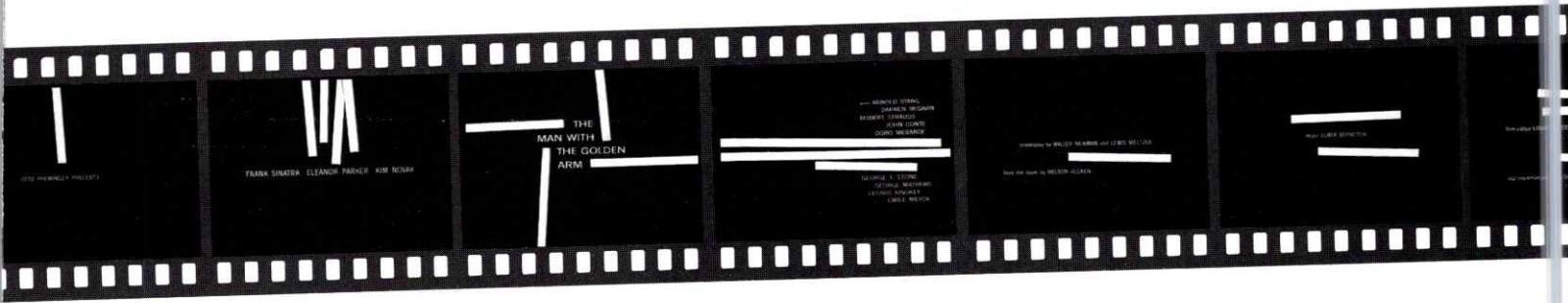
Svenskt Tenn, Stockholm.

Above Vegetable Tree textile pattern, c. 1944. After World War II, this became one of Frank's most popular designs.

Below Josef Frank, Double house with round windows, mid 1950s. The haphazard arrangement and idiosyncratic massing were typical of Frank's late designs.



Swedish Museum of Architecture.



MODERN SCREEN

By Sandy McLendon

For most lovers of classic movies, old films offer a look at fabled stars in timeless stories and glorious costumes. For viewers interested in modernist design, what's behind the actors is often much more interesting.

For nearly a century, movies have used modernism's evolving styles to give stories extra glamour. Modernist elements could tell an audience that characters were wealthy or unbound by tradition. Pitched to a mass audience, movie modernism was often different from the real thing, but it helped establish the style in the popular consciousness.

At first, modernist design was used in film largely for technical and financial reasons. Clean lines and high visual contrast rendered better than complex period styles on the film stocks used before the 1930s. And with modernism, it was unnecessary to meticulously — and expensively — research an historical period, or to purchase antique furnishings and architectural elements for sets. Modernism could be anything a moviemaker wanted it to be: the style was so new that few viewers could tell if what they saw was good or bad, real or imagined.

In the early 1920s, France led the way; Robert Mallet-Stevens (1886–1945) did art direction and set decoration for motion pictures, notably for 1924's *L'Inhumaine*, released in 1926. Mallet-Stevens's Cubist approach did not go unnoticed in the United States. Cedric Gibbons (1893–1960), the newly appointed art director of the recently formed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios, began to borrow from Mallet-Stevens, as indeed he borrowed from nearly every modernist architect and designer.

Not nearly so well-trained as his publicity hinted, Gibbons nonetheless "got" designing for the screen like nobody else. His Art Deco settings (often used as background for the most glittering, best-designed Deco object of all, Joan Crawford) generally contrast curvilinear elements with the straight lines and zigzags of the style. Gibbons established two traditions that became standard practice in Hollywood.

First, he organized a design library for MGM's art department, containing books and periodicals from all over the world. Gibbons had difficulty designing the Emerald City for *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) because he felt that it required something never seen before. He eventually found inspiration in an obscure, pre-World War I periodical from Germany that had been sitting in the library

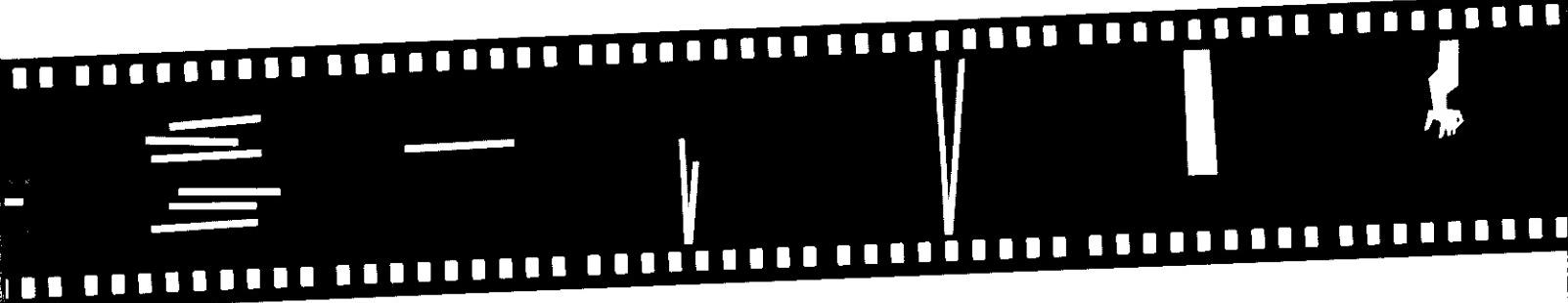
for years; it was a tiny sketch that looked like an assemblage of inverted test tubes.

M-G-M's luxurious modernism changed over the years. For 1932's *Grand Hotel*, Gibbons created a Bauhausian Berlin hotel, with an atrium presaging the designs of architect John Portman 35 years later. The Bauhaus also inspired the Riviera Hotel seen in 1931's *Private Lives*. By the time of *Oz*, versions of the widely-published Moderne designs for the 1939 New York World's Fair were showing up on film, and it was clear in the '40s that someone at M-G-M was keeping up with a new architect named Morris Lapidus; 1942's *Her Cardboard Lover* gave Norma Shearer a Palm Beach apartment house that would have been entirely at home in the real Florida ten years later.

Other studios had very different takes on modernism. RKO, the lowest budget of the major studios, used modernist sets to compete with the period pictures of better-heeled companies. The studio's chief art director, Van Nest Polglase (1898–1968), was responsible for the overall look of the Fred Astaire–Ginger Rogers movies, though Carroll Clark (1894–1968) did much of the actual design for the early films. Clark's major contribution was the invention of what became known at RKO as the "BWS," an acronym that stood for Big White Set.

The beauty of a BWS was that it was mostly empty space; only a few strong Deco or Moderne elements, such as staircases and columns, were needed, giving RKO lots of glamour on the cheap. The early Rogers and Astaire pictures used a BWS for nearly every dance number; more realistic sets representing exteriors were used later, as the films generated more revenue. Clark also gave Rogers and Astaire light, elegant Moderne interiors to act in; his emphasis on Venetian blinds in *The Gay Divorcee* (1934) made them a must-have for 1930s homeowners. Clark later became a renowned period specialist, with 1941's *Citizen Kane* one of his best-known efforts.

At Warner Bros., modernism wasn't quite so prized as at other studios. The company's thrifty approach to Depression-era filmmaking was to set its stories in the seedy furnished rooms, boarding houses and factories with which audiences were personally familiar. But in its Busby Berkeley-directed musicals, Warner excelled in much the same kind of futuristic fantasy as RKO. In *Gold Diggers of 1933*, Berkeley used simple modernist stairs, bridges and platforms filled with chorus girls holding neon-outlined violins. Berkeley's



choreography moved the dancers in kaleidoscopic patterns that accentuated the architecture, creating a wonderland guaranteed to lift the spirits even of filmgoers who'd had to choose between a movie ticket and dinner.

Later, Warner Bros. tried to become more sophisticated in its use of modernism, even attempting to get Frank Lloyd Wright to design the sets for *The Fountainhead* (1949), from the Ayn Rand novel about an architect who behaved rather like Wright himself. While Wright was willing, his demands for money and right

of approval were notable, even at a studio that dealt with Bette Davis every day. Edward Carrere was finally chosen to create a pastiche of Wright that was the subject of George Nelson's wrath in an *Interiors* article. Nelson criticized Carrere's work as a misunderstanding of Wrightian principles, justly pointing out that some designs would be unbuildable in real life.

In 1954, Warner finally got modernism right with a new version of *A Star Is Born*; set designer Gene Allen and set decorator George James Hopkins created a Malibu beach house for Judy Garland's

Top Saul Bass's titles for *The Man With the Golden Arm* (1955) used simple animated bars crisscrossing the screen in varying combinations and patterns, which ultimately morphed into the arm of the film's title. A variation of this idea was used by Bass for 1960's *Psycho*.

Below The Vandamm House, seen in *North by Northwest*, was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's later residential works; Wrightian fenestration and rough-hewn limestone laid in the manner the architect preferred, seen here, were just two of the keenly observed details found on the set.

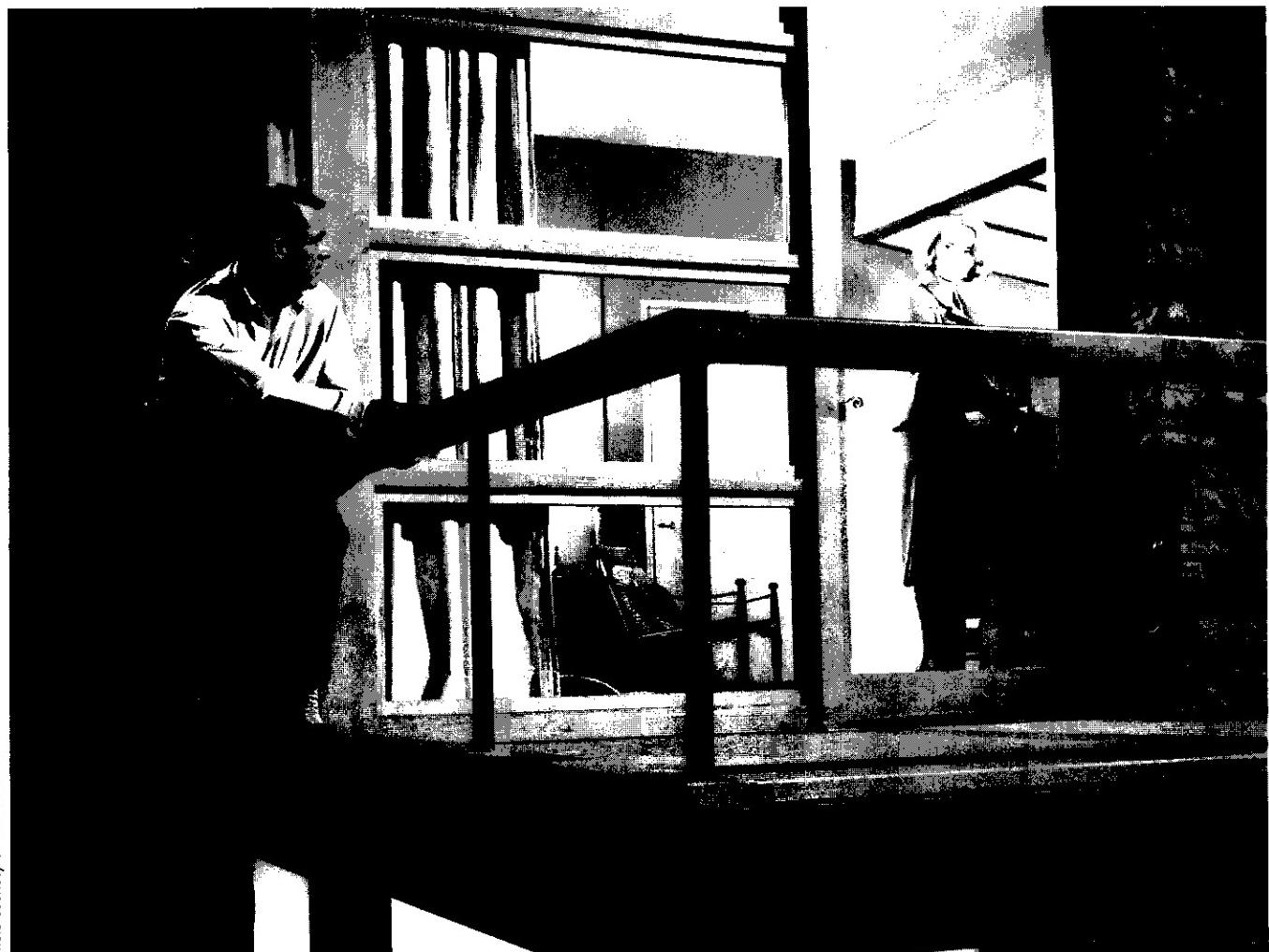
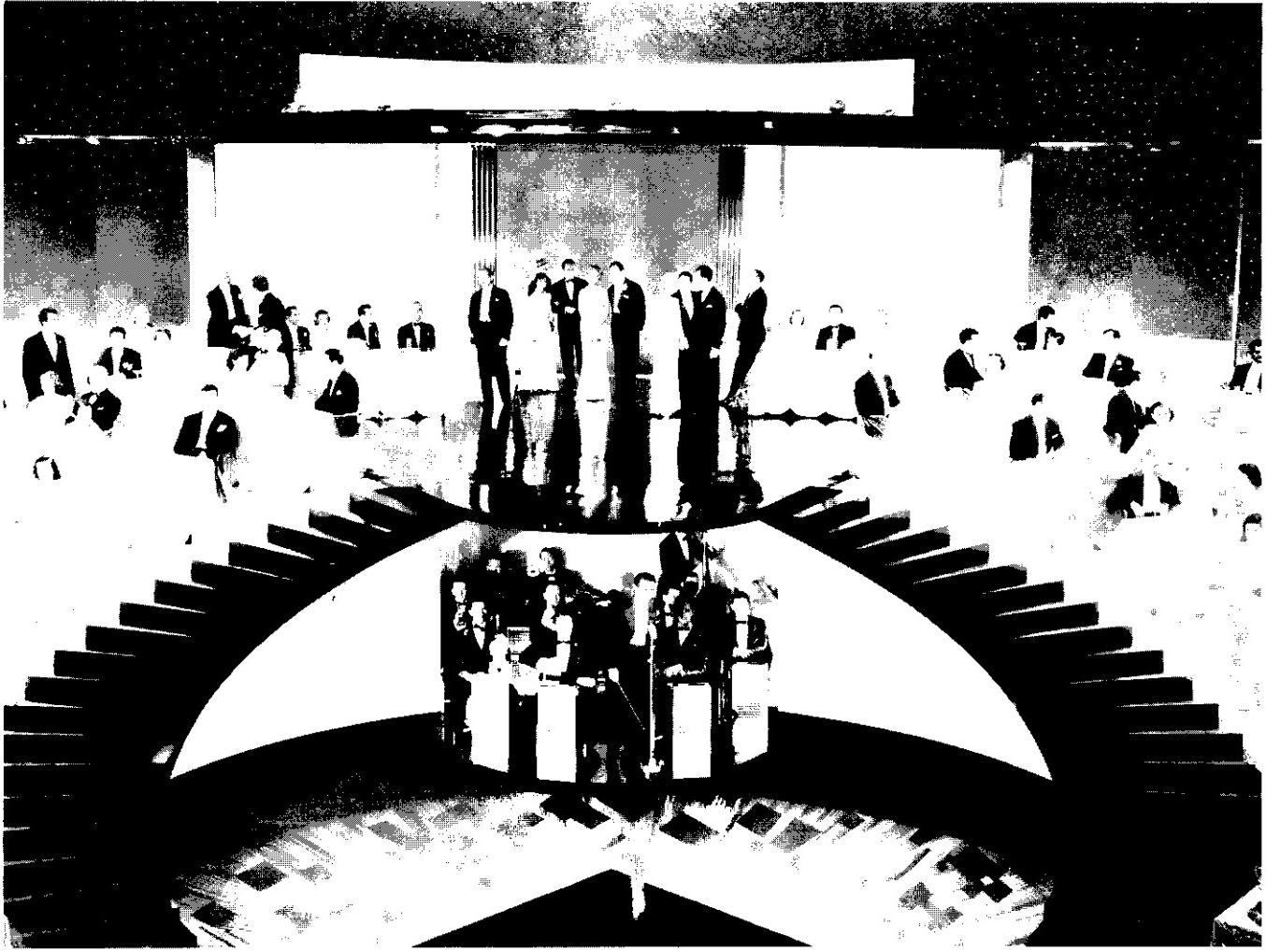


Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.



Above At thrifty RKO, a few strongly-designed elements, such as stairs and dancing platforms, could evoke a glamorous Deco nightclub, as seen in this typical Big White Set for *Swing Time* from 1936.

character. Its exteriors based on some of the Case Study Houses and its interiors on the work of interior designer Billy Haines, the beach house was crammed with modernist furnishings, including a pair of Mies van der Rohe *Barcelona* chairs, their cushions remade in white by the studio's upholstery shop.

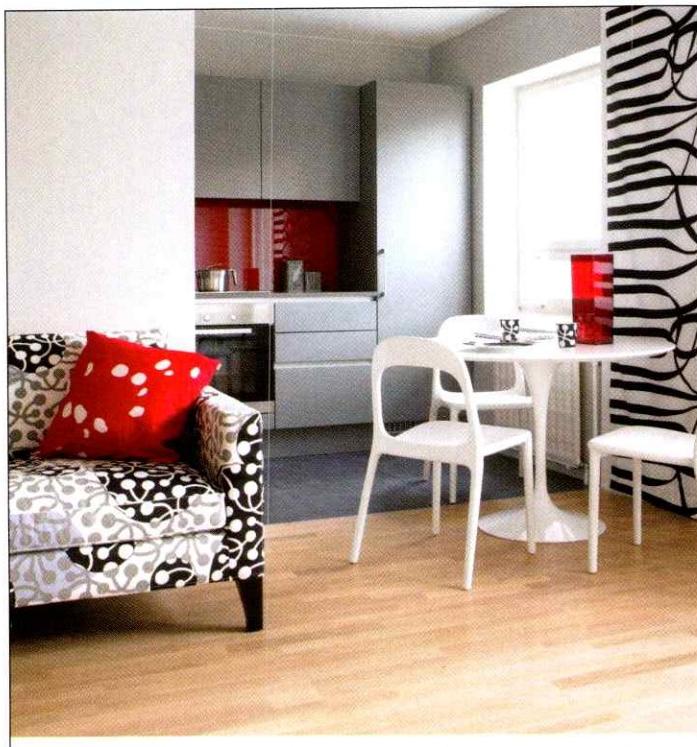
By the 1950s, modernism was so mainstream that studios used it less to denote otherworldly luxury and fantasy than to let audiences know that the characters in a film were "with it." Even when the setting of a story was traditional, modernist elements were often appended to films to make them look up-to-date. United Artists' *The Man With the Golden Arm* (1955) was given modernist titles and poster art by Saul Bass, completely concealing the downscale settings of the movie until ticketbuyers saw the film itself. Bass (1920–96), who was also an industrial designer, became one of the most sought-after title designers in Hollywood; *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959), *Psycho* and *Spartacus* (both 1960), and *West Side Story* (1961) are just some of the films that received the Bass "touch."

Paramount went Bass one better with the main titles for 1957's *Funny Face*, a musical set against the world of the fashion industry. Richard Avedon (1923–2004) was commissioned to shoot *Harper's Bazaar*-style photos as backgrounds; the graphic style of the titles was based on the look of the magazine as it appeared during the reign of editor Carmel Snow (1887–1961), and owed much

to the pioneering graphic work of the Bauhaus's Herbert Bayer (1900–85).

Onscreen modernism reached its zenith in the 1959 Alfred Hitchcock film *North by Northwest*. In addition to the Bass titles (imposed on a background of New York's 1952 Lever House, designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill), the film included a sequence set in the United Nations Building (1950), based on a concept by Le Corbusier (1887–1965). The *20th Century Limited* luxury train, designed in 1938 by Henry Dreyfuss (1904–72) is seen, although with later changes not by Dreyfuss. The Mount Rushmore climax of the movie shows both the park's visitor's center, designed by Harold Spitznagel & Associates in 1957, and a Frank Lloyd Wright-style eyrie atop the monument for villain Phillip Vandamm, played by James Mason. Designed by Hitchcock's favored production designer, Robert Boyle, the Vandamm House is one of the better Wright copies on film; its massing and detail are believable. Only the steel beams supporting its cantilever give it away; Wright would have insisted upon a true cantilever, as he did at Fallingwater.

While modernism continues to appear in movies, today it generally evokes the midcentury era. Only yesterday's films show modernism as it was intended to be: the perfect backdrop for lives well-lived, the best of the future today and the promise of a tomorrow with endless possibilities. ■



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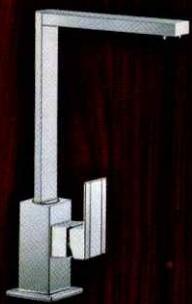
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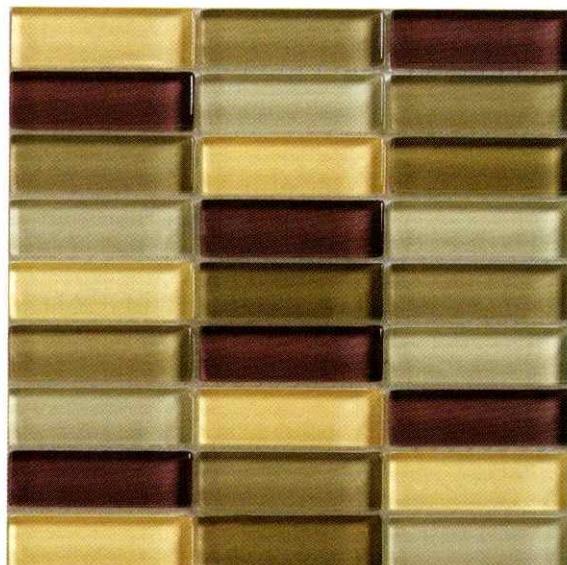
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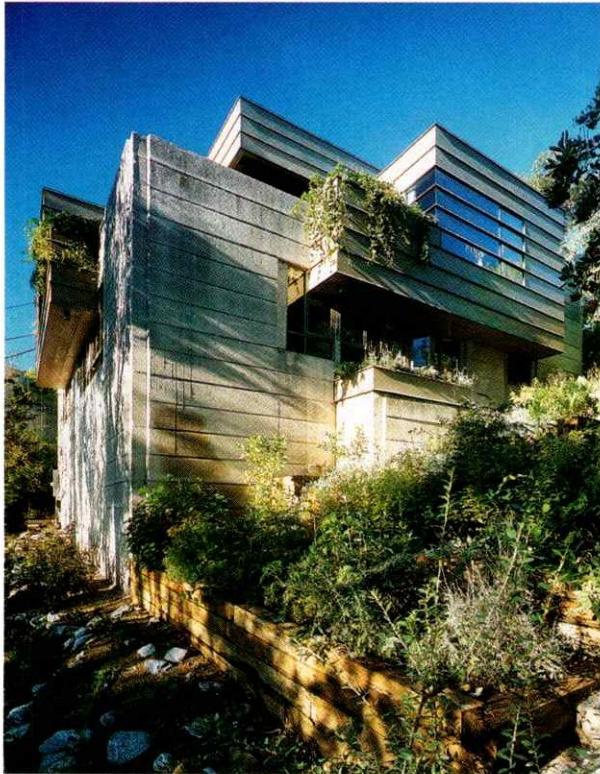
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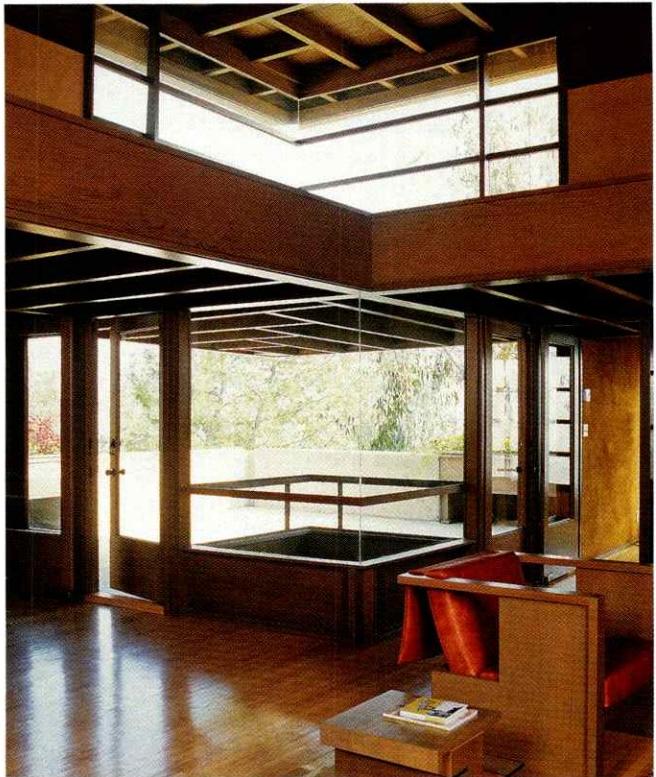
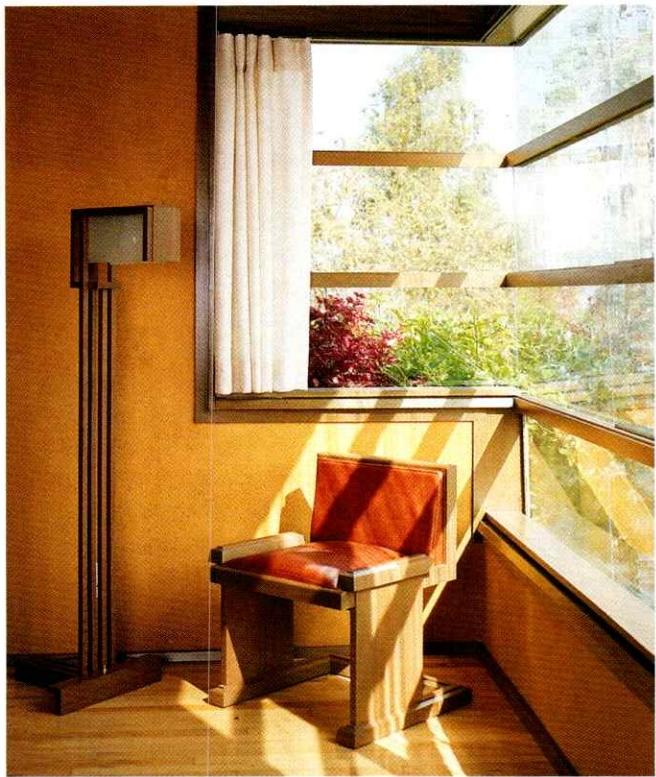
Text and Photography by
Tim Street-Porter

To many people, Los Angeles is synonymous with the world of entertainment. To lovers of architecture, however, L.A.'s claim to fame may be its unrivaled inventory of classic modernist residences from the last century: from early ventures in protomodernism by Irving Gill, starting in 1911, to John Lautner's revolutionary freeform buildings, designed through the 1980s.

These houses were mostly ignored until a few years ago. Then a new generation of younger homeowners, many from the city's entertainment industry, inspired by a broadening interest in modernism, arrived on the scene. Neglected works by Richard Neutra, Rudolf Schindler, Pierre Koenig and Lautner were rediscovered, renovated and made fashionable. Gradually these houses became something worth paying a premium for.

In 1999, a somewhat disenchanted actor and producer, Michael LaFetra, arrived in L.A. from New York. Tired of waiting for the phone

Above, left and opposite The How House (1925), by Rudolf Schindler, has views to the San Gabriel Mountains. The restoration includes interior plaster colors matched to original samples, and furniture and lighting by Kristin Kilmer, inspired by Schindler designs, in redwood, red leather and linen. The club chairs are variations on a chair from Schindler's Kings Road House. A vegetable garden from Schindler's original plans was added.



to ring, he had decided to take a year off, live off his savings and follow his curiosity. His first step would be to buy a house, preferably near the beach. Knowing nothing about architecture, he began looking for a conventional California saltbox cottage. His realtor, perhaps wanting to push him a little, dropped off a pile of architecture magazines, one of which was an *Architectural Digest* featuring Pierre Koenig's newly renovated 1958 Case Study House #21. This, unexpectedly, was LaFetra's epiphany. To use his words, "it leaped off the page."

But the house was not available, so he went instead for a fairly nondescript one at Broad Beach, in Malibu. Two months later, his realtor called to say that the Koenig house had just come onto the market and they went to see it. "As we walked in," he says, "they were playing Frank Sinatra, and I immediately

Below The kitchen entry of Case Study House #21 (1958), by Pierre Koenig.

Below bottom Michael LaFetra's current home, the Gould-LaFetra House (1967) by Ray Kappe. Pendant lamp and couch were added according to the architect's original plans as was the fireplace (not pictured).



knew I had to buy it." Thus, began his induction into the world of L.A. modernism.

Within a week or two of moving into Case Study #21, LaFetra received an unexpected phone message, from Mr. Koenig himself: "This is Pierre, your architect. Call me if you need anything." LaFetra invited him over, and seized the opportunity to ask him if anything had been left unfinished in renovations Koenig had undertaken for previous owners. There were a few things, as it turned out, and LaFetra found himself enjoying the experience of working with "his architect" to complete the restoration process, including the pools and interior fountain, repainting and planting and pushing the house through the nomination process for Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument status.

By this time, LaFetra was developing a deeper interest in modernist architecture. "The era of modernism was an era of optimism with no cynicism or irony," says LaFetra. "There is an excess of irony today. We are also overly obsessed with square footage, which, if a structure is well-designed, is not terribly important. I don't personally need a 'chef's kitchen' and I don't think most people do. Good architecture approaches the divine; there is something deeply spiritual in inhabiting these houses."

He bought the *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles* by David Gebhard and Robert Winter, and spent months driving around the city, familiarizing himself with houses and compiling a list of his personal favorites. Over two years, this swelled to more than 35 homes, including LaFetra's "top five," four of which he eventually acquired. These included Rudolf Schindler's How House (1925) in the Marino Highlands, John Lautner's Stevens House (1967) in Malibu and his Wolff House (1961) in West Hollywood and Ray Kappe's Gould/Lafetra House (1967) in Brentwood. The fifth house on the list is Schindler's Lovell Beach House (1926).

He also purchased Schindler's 1938 Wolff House (which he no longer owns); Thorton-Abell's Rich House (1967); the Volk House (1949) by A. Quincy Jones; the Skinner House (1981) by Robert Skinner and a Richard Neutra addition to his 1937 Kaufmann House in Hollywood (which he has also since sold).

"Whenever I walked into a house by Schindler or Lautner," recalls LaFetra, now a producer at Foundation Films, which he founded in 2005, "I saw something magical going on." He felt this when he first visited the How House in 2004, which was then owned by Lionel March, a professor in the UCLA architecture department. Overwhelmed by the interiors, LaFetra said to March, "If you ever decide to sell, be sure not to let it pass into the wrong hands." March promised to keep LaFetra in mind; six months later, March retired, returned to the United Kingdom and sold his house to LaFetra.

Located near Silverlake, the How residence was designed by Schindler for Dr. James Eads How, a psychiatrist from St. Louis. It is placed at the crest of a steep slope with a view east to the San Gabriel Mountains. With its interlocking volumes it recalls the work of the early-1920s Neo-plastic movement in Europe. (According to Gebhard

Photo courtesy of Michael LaFetra.

in his 1971 biography of Schindler, the architect collected cuttings from European architecture journals of this period, including stylistically related projects by Theo van Doesburg, Adolf Loos and J.J.P. Oud.).

The house's central volume is a cube, with an attached entry and a kitchen wing. The redwood-sheathed structure rises up from a concrete base that emerges out of the hillside. The concrete was poured and shuttered at sixteen inch intervals to match the horizontal module of the redwood battens above, which continue as transoms across window areas, all contributing to a stratified appearance.

A small glazed entry leads into the second-story living room, a dramatic space that expands outward to a terrace overlooking the view. Schindler pushed the living room ceiling upward, adding a vertical dynamism to the space. Entering further, one becomes aware of a diagonal axis linking the square plan of the living room with the square-shaped terrace outside, articulated by the patterning of the wooden ceiling overhead. These two spaces are divided by a glass wall that pushes into the interior envelope. The living room fireplace is double-sided, also serving the dining room beyond. Bedrooms are on the floor below.

The house needed cosmetic restoration. For this LaFetra called in Jeff Fink, an architect and contractor who has worked on 13 Schindler restoration projects. The exterior redwood cladding, which had deteriorated so extensively that one could push a finger through in places, was replaced, as were the deck and some rotted beams. The redwood was stained with Schindler's recipe of linseed oil, turpentine and green pigment. Inside, Fink worked with interior designer Kristin Kilmer (who also collaborated with him on the other houses featured in this article) to furnish the house, recreating some of the original furniture and finishes. They reintroduced soft, earthy colors matched to traces they found of the original plaster. "I wanted to take people out of the "black and white" images of these houses," says LaFetra, referring to the photographs that make up the historical record of Schindler's original designs. "Schindler loved color from the time he spent in the southwest; warm-toned adobe buildings were the only examples of native architecture that he found on his travels across America. If you look at his notes, he gives you lots of hints about color." They also had original furniture and built-ins refabricated or created for the first time from Schindler's drawings.

The other architect that LaFetra particularly responds to is Lautner. The original owner of the 1961 Wolff House was a fan of Frank Lloyd Wright. Inspired by Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, he wanted to build an homage to Wright's masterpiece in Los Angeles on a site overlooking Sunset Boulevard. Wright could not take on the project, so Lautner, with his credentials as a successful ex-apprentice of Wright's, was chosen instead. The Wolff House was one of his first concrete houses, his material of choice as he moved into the

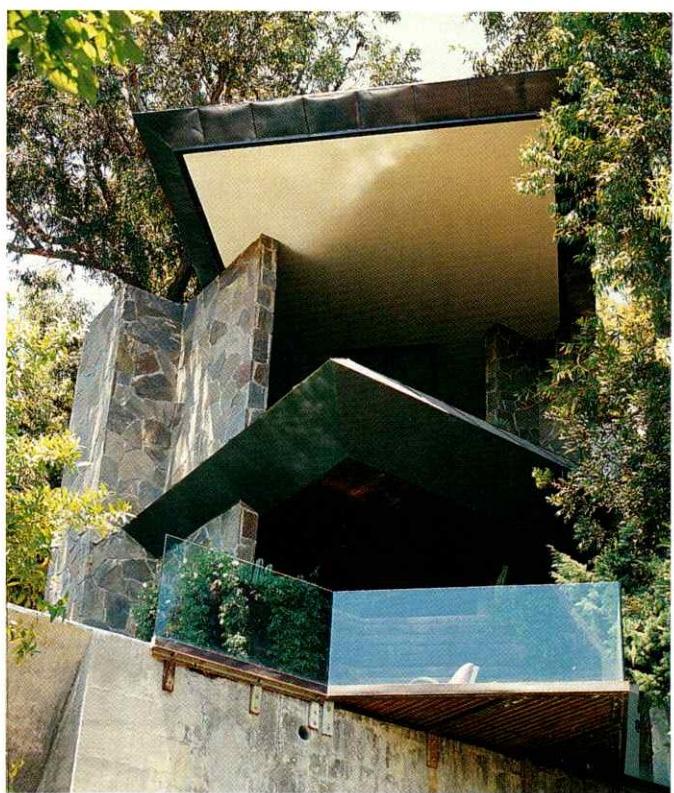
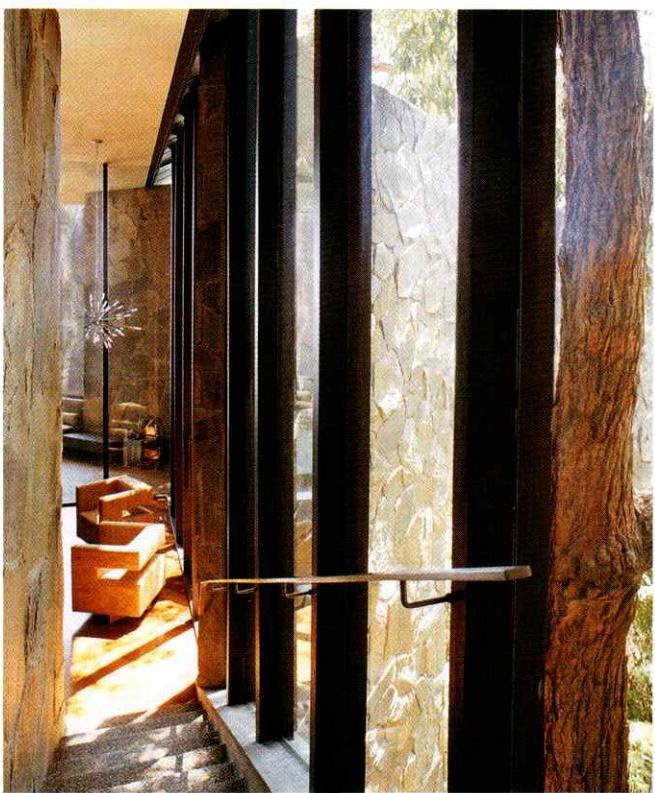


Above The living room of John Lautner's 1961 Marco Wolff House. The exterior space between the tall glazed walls and the stone wall, creates an ambiguity between indoors and out, and a mix of openness and privacy.

mature phase of his career. Concrete offered him plasticity; it was in his words "solid and free," enabling an architecture that could be shaped without modular restriction: roofs could soar and walls disappear.

The house is situated within a network of narrow lanes that run up the steep hillsides, dotted with houses of every style imaginable. One of these runs beneath the geometrically complex Wolff House: massive walls that zig-zag down the hill to add strength and earthquake resistance, copper-clad roofs and balconies overlaid at angles to each other. The lane continues sharply upwards around another curve, before arriving in front of the house, near its top, visible only as a broad carport covered by a low-pitched sweep of concrete, with the entry tucked to one side. "I have never done a facade in my life," Lautner often said, and we look in vain for one here.

Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, the entry sequence was carefully staged: first, a constricted low-ceilinged vestibule establishes a human scale, then a staircase descends a narrow space between a cement wall and an expanse of glass brushed by eucalyptus trees. Awaiting below is the dénouement: a dramatic, lofty living room with a balcony that thrusts out to embrace a view of the city. A seating area to the rear of the space nestles, cave-like, back into the hill. To the side is a double-height glazed wall and, beyond it, outside, an equally high stone-clad wall. Sandwiched between these are two eucalyptus trees – carefully



preserved during construction — which are experienced as part of the living space. This visual ambiguity is part of the fun: are these trees inside or outside?

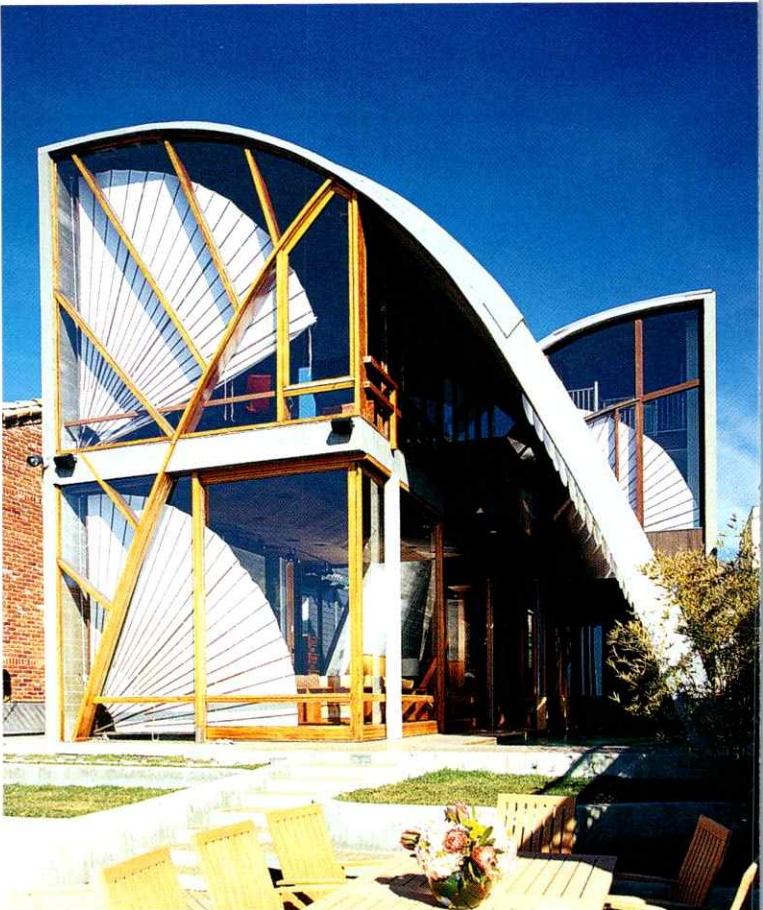
Last year, LaFetra bought the Lautner that occupied a prime position on his list of desirable houses: the beach-front Stevens Residence in Malibu Colony. Built in 1968, the house sits on a tight 32-foot lot, standing out from a row of motley cottages. Open to the ocean at one end and to the mountains at the other, the house resembles an inverted boat, thanks to its soaring concrete roof, which curves steeply over the space in an enfolding gesture, both soothing and protective. The sound of the waves is a constant presence, and sunlight, reflected off the water, penetrates far into the interior. These elements gently reinforce the nautical ambience, while the whimsically exotic window shades evoke the sails of a Chinese ship.

In his book *John Lautner, Architect*, feeling frustrated by the site's limitations, Lautner wrote of the Stevens project: "A lot of this size

Opposite The compressed space of the narrow staircase leading down from the entrance of the Wolff House (top left), expands spectacularly upon arrival in the lofty living room between the glazed wall and the fireplace (bottom). Colliding planes of the exterior (top right) were inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater.

Right The 1968 Stevens House by John Lautner, in Malibu Colony, was an ingenious solution for a narrow lot. Every room has views of the ocean to one side and the mountains to the other, including the bedrooms beneath the second arched roof, that look over the roof of the main living area.

Below The built-in furniture and herringbone patterned tile are original. Lautner designed the sailcloth and redwood window shades in the 1980s.



has always been the same: impossible. My first bout with the site and its requirements made me aware of just how difficult it would be to put all the desired rooms and spaces on this property." He added, "A prior architect had given up on including a pool. When I was first called in, I asked the owner to avoid telling me what he had heard, but rather to express his needs, whatever they might be. He did so, and I went to work on them."

Lautner gave the living room pride of place on the ground floor. Behind is the dining area, raised to provide a view over the living room to the ocean beyond. He squeezed a lap pool into a slot between the living room's glazed wall and the downward curving roof. Above is the master bedroom, its full-height glass windows overlooking the pool and the waves breaking beyond the terrace. A row of bedrooms is tucked along a passage that overhangs the lower living area, screened by a cage-like wooden structure.

Meanwhile, LaFetra still owned his non-architectural house on Broadbeach. He showed it to Koenig to see whether "his architect" considered it worthy of an upgrade. Koenig offered instead to design and build a new house on the site. Plans were drawn up, but the architect sadly died in 2004. Construction begins this spring on what will be Koenig's last house. LaFetra is also completing a documentary on the architect.

LaFetra lives with Alison Letson, a teacher, in the Ray Kappe house in Brentwood, and often spends weekends in the Stevens

House. Today, eight years after his first purchase, the 41-year-old LaFetra is regarded as an expert on restoration by local architectural historians and the L.A. Conservancy. "When I first started doing this in 1999," says LaFetra, "I was naïve about real estate, but drawn to modern architecture because I saw these houses as art that you could live in. My concern was, and is, that in certain areas of Los Angeles, the price of land far outpaces the perceived value of architecture. I don't like to see these houses destroyed. I hope to help change public perception of this era of architecture." A positive sign, he adds, is that "we are starting to see these homes traded and dealt with as works of art, and they are becoming increasingly valuable. My hope is that people who own these masterpieces will work to find buyers who will care for them." While he might consider turning one of his houses into a public museum, he sees his real task as trying to protect as many houses as possible. "That was not the initial impulse," he admits, "but that is most certainly one of the end results."

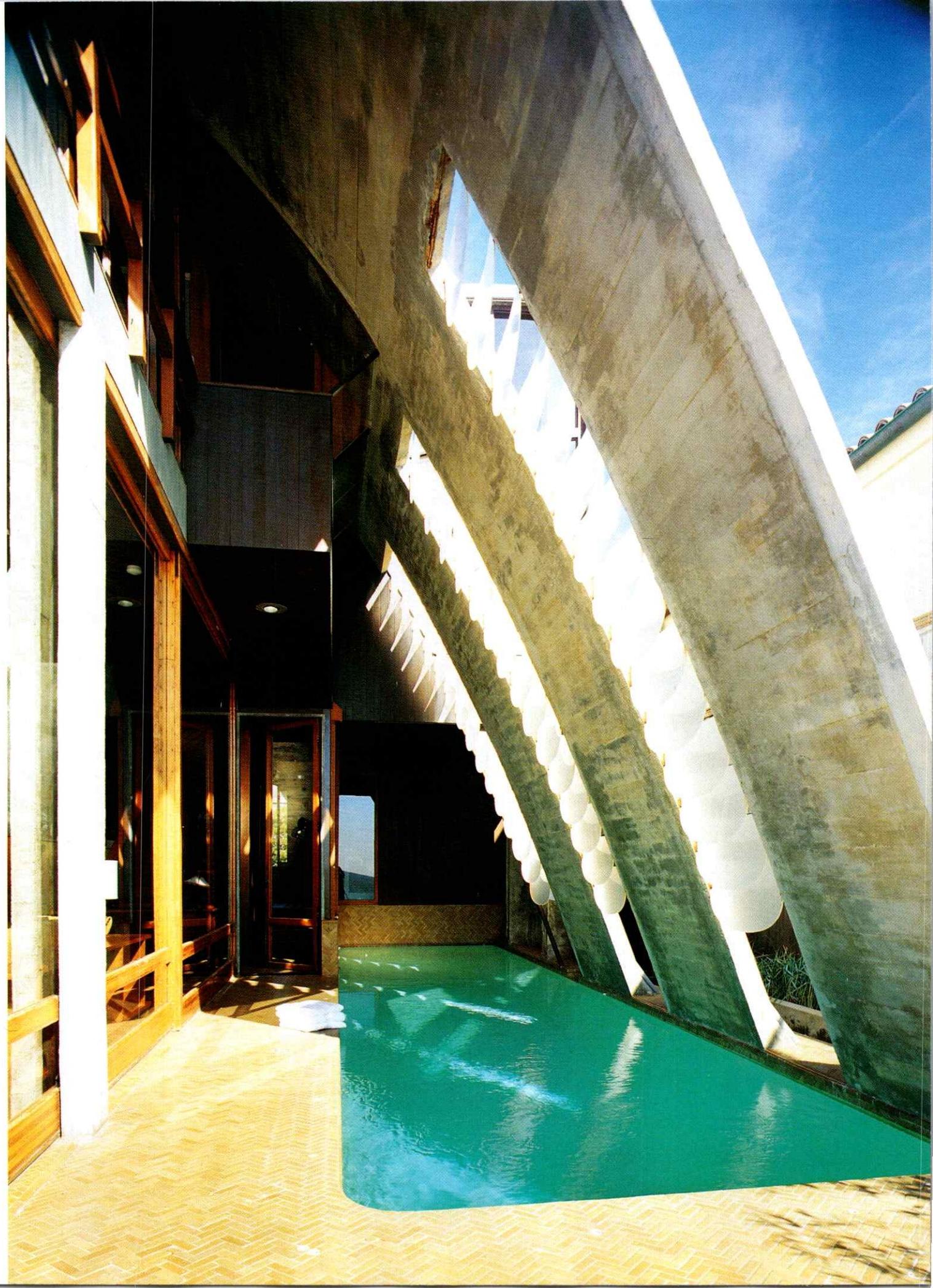
Where to go from here? LaFetra says he is not done yet. He is having a great time learning "hands on" how these architects worked and put their houses together. ■

Tim Street-Porter is a photographer and author of many books including *Los Angeles*, *Tropical House* and *Casa Mexicana*. His new book, *L.A. Modern* (Rizzoli), is due out this fall.

Below The raised dining area is in the background. Staircase leads to second level bedrooms, tucked behind wooden grid under a second arched roof.

Opposite The narrow lap pool is shaded by the descending arc of the concrete roof and translucent Plexiglas discs in narrow cut-outs. The roof that enfolds the interior as well as this outdoor space provides complete privacy from adjacent houses.





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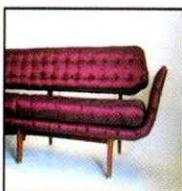
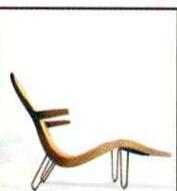
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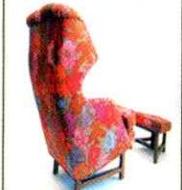
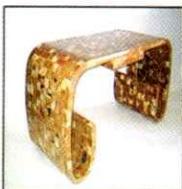
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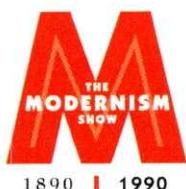
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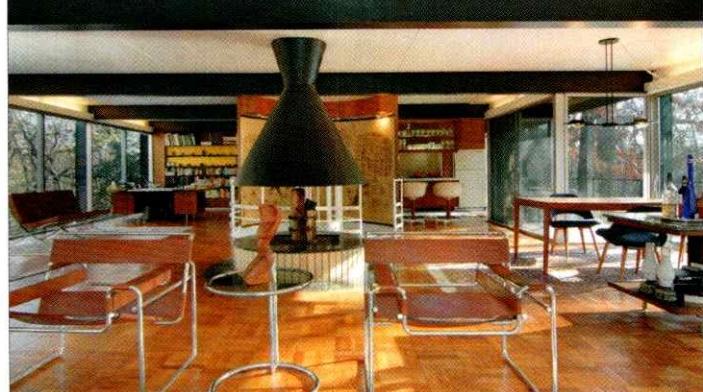
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Photo courtesy Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.



Photo courtesy Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Top The Bauhaus Building, designed by Walter Gropius, in Dessau, Germany. Built in 1926, it was restored in 2006.

Above The restoration referred to old color charts to recreate the color coding that serves as a spatial guide throughout the building.

DESSAU

Bauhaus Legacy

By Patricia Harris and David Lyon

Over the years, the term "Bauhaus" has become a kind of shorthand for unornamented modern design. It is easy to forget that it originally referred to a small school in Germany. Founded in 1919, it lasted only 23 years, but in that time, its faculty and students revolutionized design and architecture.

First established in Weimar, the Bauhaus moved to Dessau in 1925. Walter Gropius, the school's first director, designed the main building there, a seminal example of modern design. With its signature glass curtain wall and massive interlocked cubes, the building has long been a destination for artists, architects, designers and historians. But eight decades of socio-political tumult had taken their toll. Now a 10-year, \$24 million restoration completed in December 2006 has returned the building to the look and feel of the Bauhaus's most creative years, and drawn renewed attention to the legacy of Bauhaus architecture embedded in the city.

The school was founded "to create a new guild of craftsmen," wrote Gropius in his opening manifesto, "without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist." He set out to make aesthetic functionalism a template for socially responsible design, breaking with the Romantic notion of the artist as isolated genius to champion instead the artist as engaged citizen designing for the public good.

The chance to put that philosophy into practice came when the increasingly conservative Weimar regional government withdrew support from the Bauhaus in 1925. Several cities offered the school a new home. Dessau, then a growing industrial center roughly 80 miles southwest of Berlin, was ultimately the most persuasive: the city traded funding for a new campus, to be designed by Gropius, for the involvement of Bauhaus talent in urban planning, including the design of affordable homes for low-income workers.

Work on the Bauhaus campus began in September 1925 and the complex was inaugurated in December 1926. Even on such a tight timetable, Gropius succeeded in creating a showcase for his design principles and a laboratory for his theories about forging a new postwar sensibility through the synthesis of art, design and technology.

The school quickly attracted forward-thinking faculty, including Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, László Moholy-Nagy, Oskar Schlemmer and Lyonel Feininger. Among their students were German designers Marianne Brandt and Helmut Schulze and Swiss designer, educator and sculptor Max Bill. But Dessau's years as the epicenter of modernist architecture and design proved brief. The Nazi regime closed the school in 1932, although the diaspora of its faculty and students guaranteed that its ideas would have worldwide influence.

For those who want to go to the source, some of the most tangible achievements of the Bauhaus survive in Dessau, despite the destruction of 85 percent of the city by Allied bombing during World War II and the subjugation of the avant-garde to the principles of socialist realism under the Communist regime of the German Democratic Republic.

The place to begin a visit is at the **Bauhaus Building**. Its three asymmetrical wings, arranged at right angles to one another, contain the Studio House with 28 live-work spaces; the technical schools; and the stacked tract of workshops with its famous glass curtain wall. Destroyed in World War II and replaced with a traditional brick façade, the glass wall was recreated in a 1976 restoration, but black-painted aluminum structural elements were substituted for the original steel. In the most recent restoration, the exterior of this framing was repainted gray to more closely resemble the original.

Although the Bauhaus Building appears, from the outside, to be a simple assemblage of cubes, "it is a very complex building," says Monika Markgraf, who oversaw the restoration for the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, which assumed stewardship of the Bauhaus campus in 1994. "Walking through it is like walking through a film." Because the building is devoid of traditional ornamentation, color supplies an orienting "narrative," highlighting structural elements, such as load-bearing walls, and doorframes that lead to public rooms. It also groups discrete sections together as functional units and identifies building levels in stairwells. The restoration team referred to original drawings from the wall-painting workshop, which emphasized the primary colors red, yellow and blue, as well as gray.

The Bauhaus Building remains a dynamic venue. Mercedes-Benz, Bergdorf Goodman and Saab have all used it as a backdrop for advertising campaigns. "Today, on a superficial level, the Bauhaus is seen as 'cool,'" says Dr. Kirsten Baumann, deputy director of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, referring to revival of interest in the simplest and most direct expression of the modernist aesthetic. Of course, she adds, the association with luxury goods would have been anathema to the Bauhaus school.

While the Bauhaus complex demonstrates Gropius's approach to an institutional building, the three two-family houses he designed for its most prestigious faculty members — Moholy-Nagy, Feininger, Schlemmer, Paul Klee, Wassily



Photo by Patricia Harris.

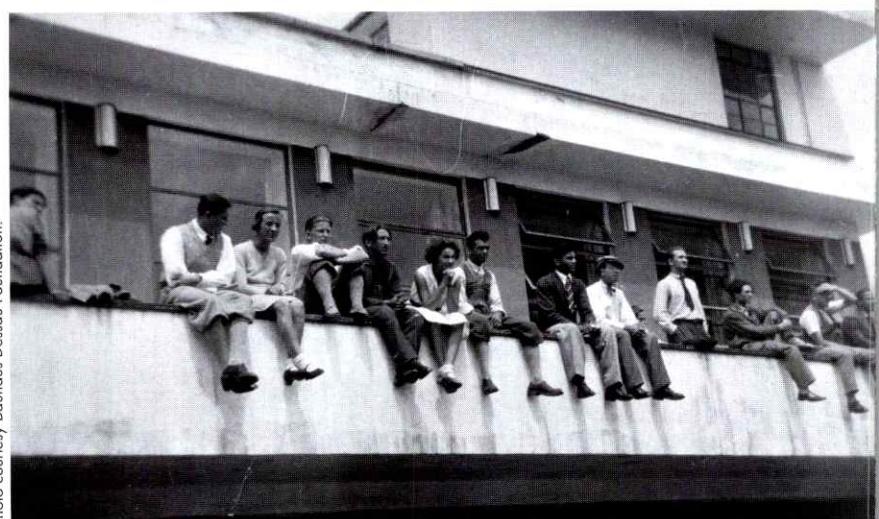


Photo courtesy Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Top Auditorium of the Bauhaus Building. The folding tubular steel seating of the auditorium was designed by Marcel Breuer. The current seating is a 1992 reconstruction.

Above Students on the parapet of the canteen terrace c. 1931.

Kandinsky and Georg Muche — demonstrate the elegance of his concepts for residential structures. The **Masters' Houses**, restored between 1994 and 2002, sit in a pine grove a five-minute walk from campus. Constructed of pre-fabricated modules, the two-family homes are set at 90 degree angles to one another to ensure privacy. Klee and Kandinsky lived in adjoining halves of one house, but the design allowed each artist to muse on his own upper-level terrace undistracted by the other. Although the homes do not contain original furnishings, some tantalizing hints remain of how the occupants personalized their spaces. Klee experimented with seven color schemes, the last of which featured soothing contrasts in gold, brown, gray, light green and light blue. Kandinsky covered one wall of his living room with gold leaf. World War II bombings destroyed Moholy-Nagy's half of one of the three houses, but Feininger's domicile on the remaining side, with its living room color scheme of black, white and orange, survived.

Gropius's own single-family home in the same complex was also destroyed. After the war, its new owner built a traditional Saxon house on the site. The city owns the property (as well as the Masters' Houses), and



Above Architecture class in front of the Bauhaus, 1931.

debate continues about whether the current structure should be razed and replaced with a reconstruction of Gropius's house. But even some proponents of modernism are inclined to leave the GDR-era home standing as an architectural testament to the social values of its time. In fact, the Bauhaus buildings are just one stage in Dessau's architectural continuum, which ranges from utilitarian 19th-century red-brick factories to nondescript concrete apartment buildings typical of the GDR era.

Several Bauhaus-associated structures cluster in the former village of Törten on the south side of the city. The best-known is the **Törten Estate**, 314 semi-detached homes commissioned by the city to be sold to low-income workers. The houses, designed by Gropius, were built in three stages between 1926 and 1928. Initially 796 square feet each, they shrank in the second phase to 759 square feet, and finally to 614 square feet. For maximum efficiency, the homes were prefabricated on the spot, with sand and gravel from the site used to make slag-concrete hollow bricks and joists. The construction elements passed along a conveyor belt for installation, where they were fitted with prefabricated steel-frame windows. By the third phase, workers could erect an entire house, complete with interior plastering, in six hours.

Signature Bauhaus elements such as the steel-framed windows placed high on the walls proved unpopular, and few of the Törten homes have retained their original spare lines. One house from the third phase is now occupied by the **Moses Mendelssohn Center**, dedicated to the Dessau-born 18th-century philosopher.

Museums and Sights

Bauhaus Building

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A permanent exhibition from the Bauhaus archives, as well as guided tours of the campus.

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An example of the third building phase in the Törten Estate.

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Kühnauer Strasse 161a

+49 340 661 19 82

www.technikmuseum-dessau.de

On the site of the last Junkers aircraft plant, this industrial museum focuses on inventor Hugo Junkers, pioneer of mechanical engineering and aviation. One section deals with his innovative metal house and furniture collaboration with Marcel Breuer.

Bauhaus Museum

Theaterplatz, Weimar

+49 364 354 59 61

www.kunstfreunde-weimar.de/kusa/index.php This museum, dedicated to the 1919–25 Weimar Bauhaus period, is 100 miles southwest of Dessau.

Dining and Accommodations

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Bauhaus Klub

Bauhaus Building

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www.klubimbauhaus.de

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Books, posters and reproductions of tableware by Bauhaus artists and designers.

Bauhaus in the 21st Century

The Bauhaus Dessau Foundation uses the original campus as a base for its programs, which include an interdisciplinary post-graduate course on urban environmental issues for architects, designers, artists and urban planners.



Above View of two Masters' Houses from the Feininger House, all designed by Walter Gropius, 1925–26.

The visitor information center for the Törten Estate is located in another experimental Bauhaus project, the **Steel House**. This unusual structure was a collaboration between architect Richard Paulick and Georg Muche, who is now remembered as a painter but was deeply involved in design and architecture experiments at the Bauhaus. After World War I, a few German designers thought that prefabricated steel houses could help address the national housing shortage, but demand for the structures never materialized. This prototype contains more than 900 square feet of living space with three small bedrooms.

Gropius also designed the **Konsum**, or **Co-op Building**, the visual centerpiece of the Törten Estate. The structure conjoins a low horizontal box that accommodated a café, grocer and butcher with a rectilinear column containing rental apartments. A nearby electrical tower prominently advertised one of the estate's modern amenities.

After Gropius left the Bauhaus in 1928, the Bauhaus Building Department, under Hannes Meyer, who succeeded Gropius as director, developed another approach to low-income housing. Named for its groundbreaking design innovation — **Housing with Balcony Access** — the group of five red brick apartment buildings, with a large common garden in the rear, is located south of the Törten estate. Entry to the buildings' rental apartments was via external staircases and balconies. The stairwells have since been enclosed with glass.

During the Törten project, Carl Fieger assisted Gropius as a technical drawing engineer while an associate at Gropius's architecture firm. He began designing single-family homes in 1927 while teaching in the Building Department at the Bauhaus. The **Fieger House**, his personal home adjacent to the Steel House, was the only one of his residential designs ever built. It demonstrates a lively combination of forms, grafting a half-round column — the house's stairwell — onto the cubes of the inhabited rooms. The house remains in private hands.

Fieger's public Dessau landmark is the **Kornhaus**, a restaurant on the banks of the Elbe River, about a 20-minute walk north of the Bauhaus campus. Built in 1929–30, the Kornhaus features a glassed-in, semi-circular verandah as the restaurant's main dining

room. Renovations in 1996 retained most of the original character of the building, which is still a popular dining spot.

The building that best exemplifies the credo that form follows function was the **Employment Office** (1928–29). With the introduction of social insurance in Germany in 1927, job matching and state financial support were combined into a single agency, and architects across the country sought to create new buildings for the tasks. Gropius designed the low-rise structure with a rectangular wing for offices and a semi-circular wing, clad in yellow brick, for public use. Five entrances segregated by gender and job category led into waiting rooms, then past potential employers — always flowing toward the center. If no job offer was made, the applicant received cash at a central payment desk. The exterior of the building has been modified, most notably with the addition of traditional casement windows. The interior has been reconfigured to serve as the city's traffic department.

German reunification has brought Dessau the promise of economic rejuvenation — an optimism most evident in the first landmark building to be constructed since the end of the Bauhaus era. In 2005, the **Federal Environmental Agency** relocated its chief operations to a stunning postmodern complex, designed by the firm of Sauerbruch Hutton of Berlin, that was constructed on a remediated brownfield near the central train station. Its undulating ribbon of offices faced with glass and wood is a model of sustainable design, with high-efficiency insulation and on-site energy generation through geothermal heat exchange, photovoltaic arrays and, in a nod to the site's industrial past, an electrical generator fired by landfill gas. The structure's center features park-like landscaping beneath a high roof of folded glass panels. Although the style of the building is far more eclectic than any Bauhaus architect would have contemplated, its form nevertheless supports its function — manifesting a social contract between government and populace. ■

*Based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, **Patricia Harris** and **David Lyon** write extensively on art, design, travel and food.*



Photo by Fiona Lindsay Shen.

SHANGHAI SINO DECO

By Fiona Lindsay Shen



Photo by Deke Erh.

Top Section of the Bund, Shanghai's signature stretch of waterfront 20th-century Western architecture, showing the Peace Hotel (center), with peaked roof, and the Bank of China (right).

Above Decorative detailing accents an entrance to the Sassoon House. Art Deco plasterwork, featuring sumptuous floral motifs, linear and geometric designs or Chinese symbols, enhances buildings from this period throughout the city.

Frenetic, restive, capricious, Shanghai is unflagging in its appetite for progress. Its forms are alternately elegant, brutal or flamboyant, shaped by economic booms during the 20th century – and now the 21st – that have witnessed massive construction activity and population surges. The current growth spurt, which took off in the early 1990s, has sent the population soaring to nearly 20 million, making Shanghai among the world's ten most populous cities. Cranes swing over swathes of gashed streetscape. Flares from welding torches compete with neon to illuminate the night. Much of Shanghai bristles with new skyscrapers. Surviving between the shiny towers and rubble strewn lots are intriguing old neighborhoods preserved merely by chance, through benign neglect. But it's a precarious slumber.

The last time the city saw such sustained building was in the 1920s and 1930s, when the Art Deco style, expressing urban drama, worldly éclat and technological prowess, best embodied the city's modernist aspirations. Many architecturally significant hotels, ballrooms, cinemas, department stores, apartments, villas and – ballast of a high-rolling economy – banks, were built in these decades. This heritage is now under threat from the city's current building campaign, in which, ironically, a nod towards Art Deco forms is often used to heighten a new project's marketability.

This is a city where walled gardens of palm trees, aloe, yucca and magnolia screen Art Deco villas, nautically styled with portholes, funnels, sleek wrap-around balconies and irreproachable cream stucco cladding. This is also a city of once-gracious apartment buildings, now festooned with laundry and bulky air conditioning units. Balconies are enclosed with blue glass, and swimming pools and roof gardens were long ago sacrificed for bedrooms. It is a city that embraces ambitious and laudable campaigns to restore its iconic architecture – but claims more than its share of mutilated icons. In the shabbiest of lanes, sensitively restored 1920s town houses coexist with painted slogans that exhort residents to abandon old homes and embrace the new. It's all impetus to plan a visit sooner rather than later.

While Art Deco buildings can be found throughout Shanghai, the most notable are concentrated in two main areas: the former International

Settlement and the former French Concession. The city's status as a pivotal international trading center dates to the 1840s, when self-governing foreign settlements were established after the Opium War. The disintegration of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 presaged years of civil conflict and Japanese militarism; the settlements were perceived as sanctuaries in which a cosmopolitan society could flourish and conduct business freely. Resilient immigrants, and a small but culturally progressive Chinese middle class, became the inhabitants of Art Deco homes and consumers of decorative arts.

The International Settlement is fringed by its bombastic "Bund" (an anglicized Hindi term meaning embankment), Shanghai's best-known stretch of early 20th-century Western architecture overlooking the Huangpu River, and long the city's public face; the stretch of buildings was designated a Modern Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2003. The city's commercial showcase, it merged classical and Art Deco styles to symbolize the concurrent ideals of longevity and progress. Palmer and Turner, a British Hong Kong-based architectural firm with a prolific Shanghai branch founded in 1912, was favored for its fusion of neo-classicism and modernism. Technologically astute, the firm, led in Shanghai by George Leopold Wilson, demonstrated that high rises could be built on the city's notorious foundation of mud, and created nine of the 13 buildings erected on the Bund from 1920.

The most sumptuous of these was **Sassoon House** (1929), *20 the Bund*, a 12-story Art Deco icon built for the property and banking tycoon Sir Victor Sassoon. Anchored on a raft of concrete and wood, its sleek verticality is emphasized by narrow windows, masonry ribbons and a stepped tower capped by a steeply pitched roof, lending it the appearance of "an Art Deco rocket ship," as Shanghai architectural historian Peter Hibbard aptly puts it. Its interior was lavishly studded with Lalique glass and still retains some of its original plasterwork, ironwork and fittings. Now the north wing of the Peace Hotel, it is still a pivotal building: its new joint Chinese and North American management plans an historically sensitive renovation designed by HBA/HirschBedner Associates, that could play an inspirational role in the city's preservation agenda.

Palmer and Turner, in partnership with British-trained Chinese architect H.S. Luke, also designed the building next door at *23 the Bund*, for the **Bank of China** (1937–40s). A substantial granite-faced building, it is a hybrid Art Deco skyscraper cum Chinese temple of commerce, with Oriental-style window lattices and a blue-tiled roof with up-tilted eaves.

North of Suzhou Creek lies Palmer and Turner's **Broadway Mansions** (1934), *20 North Suzhou Rd.* On its completion, this monumental pyramid was one of Shanghai's two tallest buildings. Part hotel, part apartment block, it also catered to that fixture of Shanghai economic life during the Concession period – the young, single expatriate – with its 99 stylish and compact bachelor pads.

Another of Palmer and Turner's giant apartment projects was the **Embankment Building** (1933), *340 North Suzhou Rd.*, stretching for a quarter mile along Suzhou Creek. Built for Victor Sassoon, it was admired as "one of the coolest places of residence in Shanghai in summer," and seems on the verge of regaining both climatic and colloquial

Right top The Joint Savings Society Building (1934), by László Hudec, now the Park Hotel.

Right bottom Joint Savings Society Building, line drawing from *The Builder*, Vol. 2, [undated].

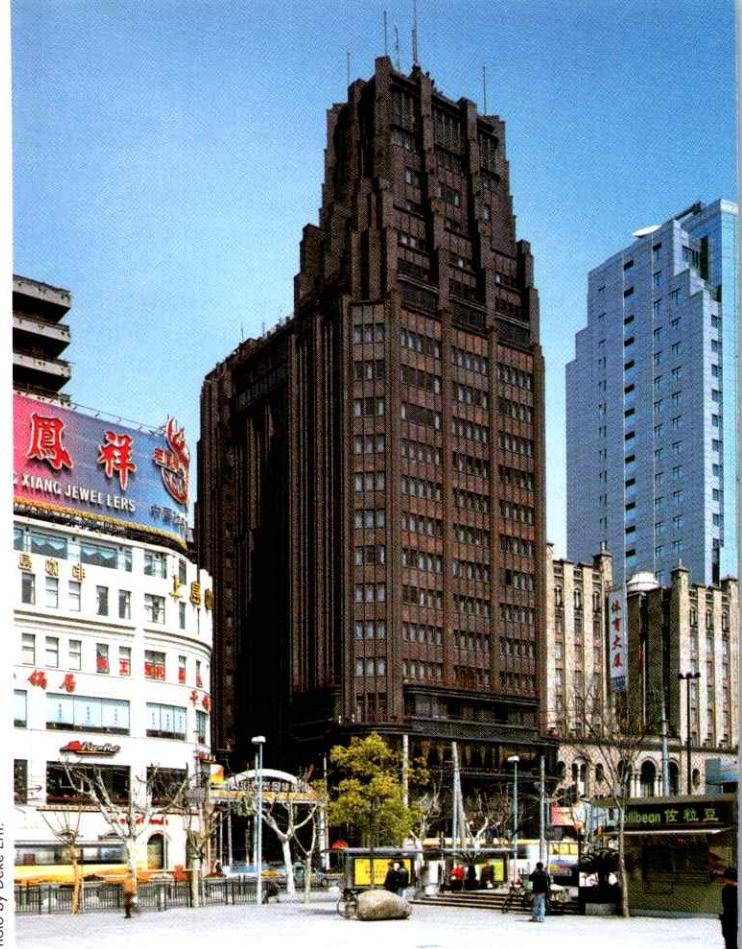
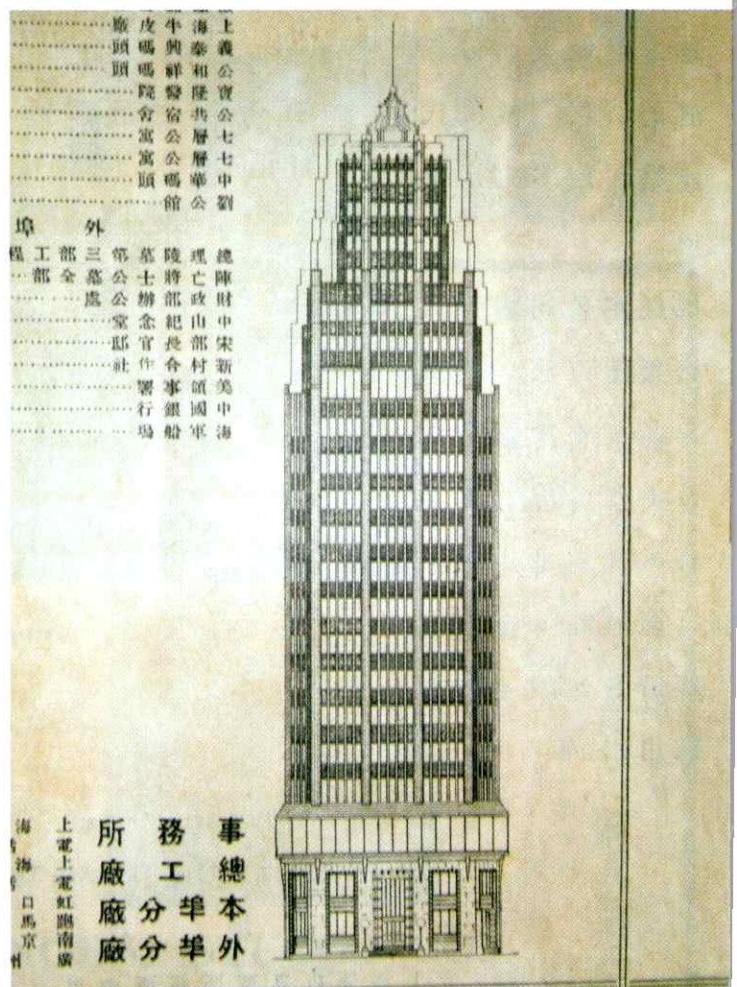


Photo by Deke Ehr.



meanings of that word. Its central location and panoramic views have made it a strategic choice for new buyers, some of whom are engaging in sensitive restoration of the once elegant interiors. Through commissions such as this, Sir Victor Sassoon helped form the Art Deco character of Shanghai.

Like Palmer and Turner, the Hungarian architect Ladislaus (László) Hudec created outstanding Art Deco hotels, apartments, banks and entertainment halls. Following a Beaux Arts training in Budapest, Hudec fought in World War I, was captured by the Russians, and sent to a POW camp in Siberia. He escaped, making his way south through China to Shanghai, like legions of refugee White Russians who would also change the cultural landscape of Shanghai. His buildings have the panache of his life story, the most dramatic of them being the **Joint Savings Society Building** (1934), 170 West Nanjing Rd., now the **Park Hotel**, an imposing brick shaft with an elegantly stepped upper tower. Dulled by decades of air pollution, the brick and tessellated tile cladding once lent a textural depth and shimmer of color only intimated today under shifting sunlight. (2008 has been designated the "Year of Hudec" in Shanghai. For more information visit www.hudec.sh.)

The Joint Savings Society was just one of a bevy of banks; in the mid 1920s, Shanghai's banks held assets of over three

billion US dollars. Buildings for these institutions were the testing ground for a generation of Chinese architects, many of whom had studied at North American universities. Allied Architects, a prestigious firm founded by three Chinese graduates of the University of Pennsylvania, designed **Chekiang First Commercial Bank** (1948), 151 Hankou Rd., and, with Hungarian architect C.H. Gonda, the **Bank of Communications** (1948), 14 the Bund. Poy Gum Lee, a Chinese-American graduate of Pratt Institute, designed the **Bank of Canton** (1934), 355 Middle Jianxi Rd., and the **Y.W.C.A. building** (1932), 133 Yuan Ming Yuan Rd., a stylish synthesis of Western modernism and Chinese ornament.

The International Settlement was where Shanghai did business; the French Concession was where many foreigners and wealthy Chinese lived. Shaded by plane trees shipped from France, the avenues and lanes of this area are lined with villas, Art Deco apartment buildings and traditional Chinese dwellings infused with Art Deco, Classicism or Romanticism (or a mixture of all three).

The French architectural firm Léonard, Veysseyre and Kruze was especially prolific in the creation of both imposing and intimately scaled apartments. As with Hudec, their artistic expression developed from a rigorous Beaux Arts training. Residential examples of their restrained modernism, with an emphasis on the balancing

Below left Entrance to the Washington (1928), by Alexander Yaron.

Below right The recently restored Buddhist temple of Fa Zang Jiang Si (1923). Sunbursts, scrolling clouds, cascading waves and other decorative details underscore the native roots of Shanghai Art Deco.



Photo by Fiona Lindsay Shen.



Photo by Fiona Lindsay Shen.

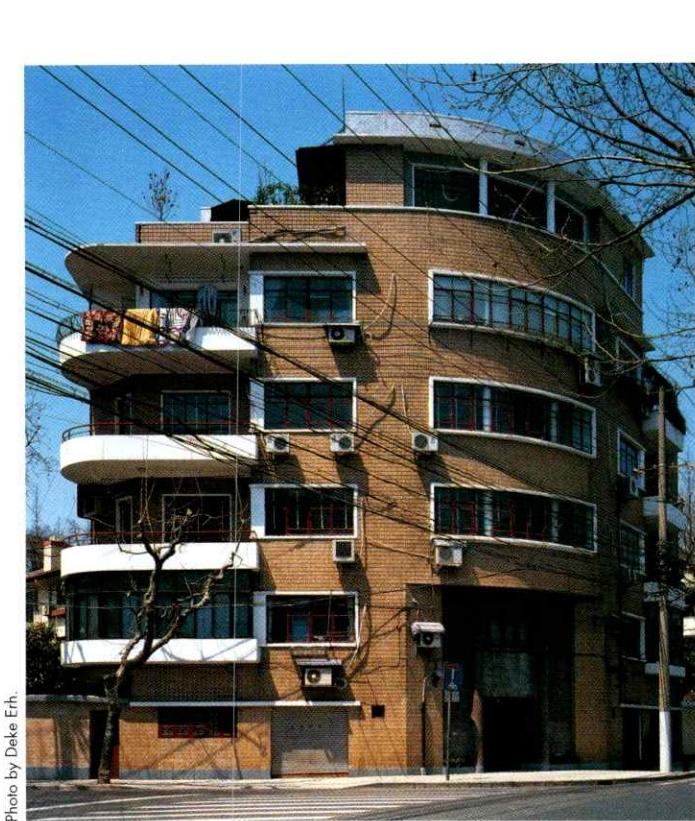


Photo by Deke Erh.

Above Amyron (1941) by Léonard, Veysseyre and Kruze. This small, streamline apartment building sweeps around a quiet corner of the former French Concession.

of solids and voids, are **Willow Court** (1934), 34 West Fuxing Rd.; **Gascogne** (1935), 1202 Middle Hauhai Rd.; **Dauphine** (1935), 394 West Jianguo Rd.; and **Amyron** (1941), 14 Gao An Rd.

Some roads are virtual rosters of significant Art Deco buildings, including Hengshan Road and Fuxing Road. But these are also streets of more modest apartments, with balconies displaying azaleas and potted lemon trees, portholes cranked open to catch the humid breezes, decorative iron door grilles and façades accented by bands of brick and plasterwork.

The lanes off the Concession's main thoroughfares reveal another fascinating aspect of Shanghai Art Deco, where traditional regional architecture melds with modernism. *Lilongs*, or lane houses, are a distinctive Shanghai high-density housing type. Many tracts were built in the 1920s and 1930s in response to an influx of residents seeking sanctuary from civil unrest. These *lilongs*, which may be in the configuration of low-rise apartments or semi-detached houses, are often infused with references to Art Deco in their form or decoration.

The *Shikumen*, or "stone frame door" — a cross between terraced housing and traditional courtyard architecture — provided enormous play for Art Deco ornament around the entrance to each unit. Often, the ornament draws on Chinese symbols such as fish, coins, waves or clouds.

Even in the warren of lanes in the historic Old City, the vocabulary of Art Deco abounds. However, this area has proved particularly vulnerable to redevelopment, and much of this housing is currently being razed because of its deteriorated state and lack of basic amenities.

Orientalism was a sub-genre of European Art Deco; in Shanghai, these references signify a returning to roots. **Fa Zang Jiang Si** (1923), 271 Ji'an Rd., a Buddhist temple built at the edge of the French

Visiting Shanghai

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architecture.

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river of the Bund's Art Deco
buildings.

Face Bar

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House, 118 Second Ruijin
Rd.; +86 21 6466 4328

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former Morris Estate. Visit
Building 3, an Art Deco villa.

The Nine

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by Taiyuan Rd

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Small, secluded Art Deco
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former French Concession.

Historic Hotels

Many historic Shanghai
hotels are still in operation
and enjoy choice loca-
tions, although the original
interiors have been altered.
Visitors should research the
amenities and service.

Metropole Hotel

www.metropolehotel-sh.com

Broadway Mansions

www.broadwaymansions.com

Park Hotel

www.parkhotel.com.cn

Ruijin Guest House

[www.china.showhotel.com/
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Photo by Michael Portman. Photo courtesy John Portman and Associates.

Architectural Insights

Exhibition Centre

100 People's Ave.,
+86 21 6318 4477

A showcase of Shanghai's architectural history and aspirations, with photographs, models and multimedia displays, and an eye-popping model of the city in 2020.

Former Residence of Lu Xun

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Shanying Rd. by Duolun Rd.
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Revered as one of Shanghai's foremost modernist writers, Lu Xun spent his last years in this Art Deco lane house, which is furnished with his belongings. Interesting Art Deco Shikumen houses and other Concession-era villas survive in the lanes around Duolun Road.

Shanghai Museum

201 People's Ave.
+86 21 6372 3500
www.shanghaimuseum.net
Chinese bronzes, coins, furniture and sculpture from the Neolithic Age to the present illustrate the symbolic motifs used in Chinese architecture from ancient times to today.

Shanghai Municipal History Museum

Gate 4, Oriental Pearl Tower,
1 Century Ave., Pudong
+86 21 5879 1888
Special emphasis on Shanghai's Concession era, with artifacts, dioramas and life-size tableaux.

Shikumen Open House Museum

No. 25, Lane 181, Taicang Rd.,
by Xingye Rd.
+86 21 3307 0337
www.xintiandi.com
A reconstruction of a middle class traditional home, situated in Xintiandi, a prestigious development by Ben Wood that has its detractors, but has helped demonstrate the financial viability of preservation.

Deke Erh Art Center

Building 2, Lane 210, Taikang Rd.
Art center run by photographer and collector Deke Erh, who specializes in Art Deco design. Taikang Art Street itself provides a view of contemporary life in Shikumen lilongs.

Above left Art Deco elements are found throughout Shanghai, even in the historic Old City.

Above right Tomorrow Square (2003), by John Portman and Associates. A 45° rotation of the tower signals its change of function from apartments to hotel at the 37th story.

Concession close to the Old City, is unexpectedly Deco-esque in its plasterwork of sunbursts, scrolls and rippling waves, pristine white against saffron walls. Another example of this synthesis between modernism and traditionalism is the **Villa Bayankara** (1936), 44 Qinghai Rd., a streamline courtyard mansion, with ribbons of windows and a circular sunroom.

Outside many of these buildings, the Shanghai Municipal Government has mounted Architectural Heritage plaques. But, according to architectural historian Tess Johnston, these protected buildings represent only a small fraction of Shanghai's Art Deco heritage; a disheartening number have disappeared in the quarter century she has lived in the city. Surviving architectural gems, such as the **Paramount Ballroom** (1934) 218 Yuyaun Rd., a bastion of 1930s hedonistic nightlife, are often much altered inside.

However, there are signs that the preservation movement is maturing. At municipal and district levels, there are increasing initiatives to identify and protect historic buildings. Shanghai-trained architects can now specialize in architectural preservation. Private citizens are undertaking projects to heighten public awareness of Shanghai's architecture. And enterprise has discovered conservation's

financial clout. As local architectural preservationist Spencer Dodington remarks, "Preservation is the friend of tourism."

Meanwhile, Shanghai's 21st-century icons gesture to their predecessors. The city's newest "Art Deco rocket ship" is John Portman and Associates' thrusting **Tomorrow Square** (2003), a mixed-use development housing the luxurious JW Marriott Hotel.

Shanghai was a wealthy and prodigal city in the 1920s and 1930s; happily, a groundswell of support for preserving the Art Deco heritage of this period is beginning to influence the city's vaunted modernization. ■

Fiona Lindsay Shen is a design historian based in Shanghai with a special interest in historic preservation.

Photographer **Deke Erh** is the recipient of numerous awards, including one from the American Institute of Architects.

Special thanks to Tess Johnston for her guidance on Shanghai's Art Deco history.

Right The sumptuously streamlined interiors of the Paramount Ballroom (1934) featured circular rooms and a glass dance floor lit from beneath.

Below Villa Bayankara (1936), by Davis, Gilbert and Co. Built for a Chinese entrepreneur, this modernist four-building complex makes reference, in its siting around a courtyard, to traditional Chinese architecture.



Photo by Deke Erh.



Photo by Deke Erh.

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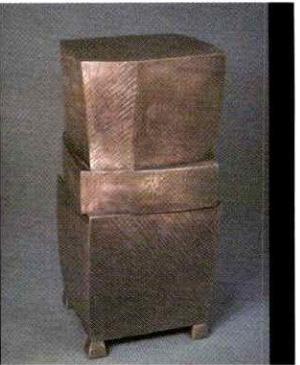


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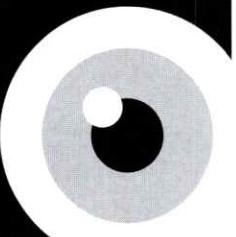


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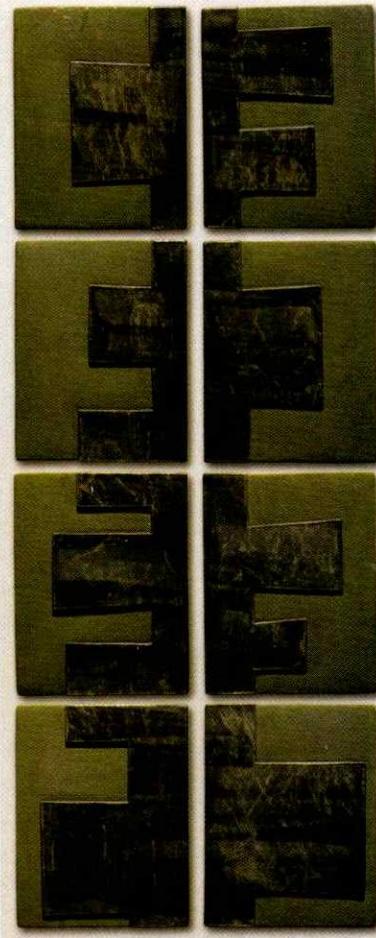
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PROFILE

Photo by Chris Ward.



Photo by Chris Ward.

HUGH ACTON Still Working after All These Years

By Dan Obermaier



Photo by Jill Obermaier.

Above Hugh Acton has reissued his walnut and brass *Suspended Beam Bench*, designed in 1954.

Top left Steel rods connect to the solid brass legs and run through the hollow brass spacers and the wood slats.

Top right Acton and his wife, Dorothy, at their home in Michigan, 2007.

How many iconic furniture designs of the 20th century were built by the designer himself — not simply the prototype, but every example sold? While still a student at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1954, Hugh Acton began fabricating his *Suspended Beam Bench* — still his most famous piece — by hand at home, finally ceasing production in 1968. But in 2006, at the age of 82, he started making the bench again in his barn in Michigan, where he lives with his wife of 56 years, Dorothy, designing, sculpting and competing in triathlons.

Acton still assembles the benches himself, using components made by local suppliers. The reissued bench, in walnut and brass, is available through Design Within Reach. A version in cherry and chrome, with matching cabinets, drawers and shelves, will be retailed nationally in galleries that already represent his sculpture and jewelry.

"I talked to Rob Forbes [the founder] of DWR after a *New York Times* article came out three years ago, about his moving to a new house," recalls Acton. "It had a photo of his furniture, and there was the bench. He was quoted saying it was among his favorite pieces. I called him up and thanked him. He said, 'Why don't you put that bench back into production?' Dorothy liked the idea; she said, 'It will give us something to do in our old age.'"

Recently, he tossed around six-foot-long walnut and brass bench tops as if they were cardboard, hammering their press-fit legs into place with a few blows. "The bench leg casting doesn't represent technology today," he admitted. "I have other, newer designs which do that. But with respect to the classic design, it's a period worth preserving. It fits in more universally, in a wider latitude of settings."

He set down a rubber mallet and talked about the genesis of the bench, initially a student design, and its sculptural Y-shaped legs. "As a student at Cranbrook," Acton explained, "I fancied myself a sculptor." The bench's wishbone-shaped legs rise up from the floor, then bend and appear to flow through the wood slats. In fact, hidden steel tubes, that snake through the slats and brass spacers, give the bench its structural strength. Such "deception" might seem to violate modern design's demand for honesty, but Acton disagrees. "The spacers do have a function," he pointed out, "to position each slat in space. They're not an illusion;

they're there to do a job." Each polished leg ends in a sled-bottomed oval foot. It's a classical, even whimsical touch, predicting the designs of postmodernists decades later. Acton's intent, though, was practical. "It allows you to easily move the bench on carpet," he said, although he adds that "it also makes it look like the bench is walking."

In 1954, Acton's bench and his other first-year designs sold out at Cranbrook's student show, producing much-needed income for the young husband and father. Inspired, he and Dorothy launched Hugh Acton Co. and, though Hugh was still enrolled at Cranbrook, set out to manufacture the bench for the retail market.

The bench was designed from the start to be shipped knocked down and assembled by the customer. While other flat-ship furniture was available at the time, it required glue or screws to assemble; Acton's bench used press-fit fasteners of his own design instead. He estimates that they built 100 benches that first year, with output doubling in each of the next few years. An eight-foot bench retailed for about \$160 in the mid 1950s — about the same price as a modernist Sears sofa of the period — and was sold nationwide, mostly through independent Dux retailers. Working alone in their attic, it was not long before the Actons could not keep up with demand for the benches, so they hired workers and moved to larger quarters. At its peak in 1968, the operation had 40 employees working in a 25,000-square-foot plant.

By 1955, Acton had completed his master's degree and had a thriving company. But this seemingly rapid journey to professional designer and manufacturer was far from direct. He grew up on a western Nebraska farm, served with the Merchant Marine during World War II, earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy at Grinnell College in Iowa, and then spent three years in the Army during the Korean War. But he always considered himself an artist; his goal at one time was to become a "cowboy artist." "I painted this as a teenager, for a neighbor," he said, gesturing to a large formal portrait of a prize-winning bull on a stairway wall. "My payment was a calf fathered by the bull, which was quite valuable."

At Grinnell, as he pondered a career in industrial design, a fellow student told him about Cranbrook. "There's no difficulty transferring from philosophy to design," Acton said. "Both use the same principles: clarity of purpose, definition of what you're doing." He also picked up skills that would prove useful for his furniture design during a short-term job in the display department at General Motors' Design Center, where he learned to use clay to model car designs; he still lays up and polishes his own fiberglass as if making a Corvette.

Acton's bench was far from his only successful piece. His *Modular Storage System* for residential use, introduced in 1957 by his own firm, featured cabinets and shelves suspended on metal uprights. It won the 1957 American Institute of Design award along with Eero Saarinen's "Pedestal" group for Knoll. In 1959, he designed a wall-hung closet for use with movable aluminum panels for the Reynolds Metals building in Southfield, Michigan, by Detroit architect Minoru Yamasaki (best known today for the World Trade Center in New York). This suspended closet earned him the first of his three patents, as well as an Association of Business Designers award. In the 1960s, Acton's company introduced the "I-Frame" line of commercial desks, tables and case goods and the patented *Unicolumn Folding Table*, designed at Yamasaki's request. It was the first center-column table to fold for

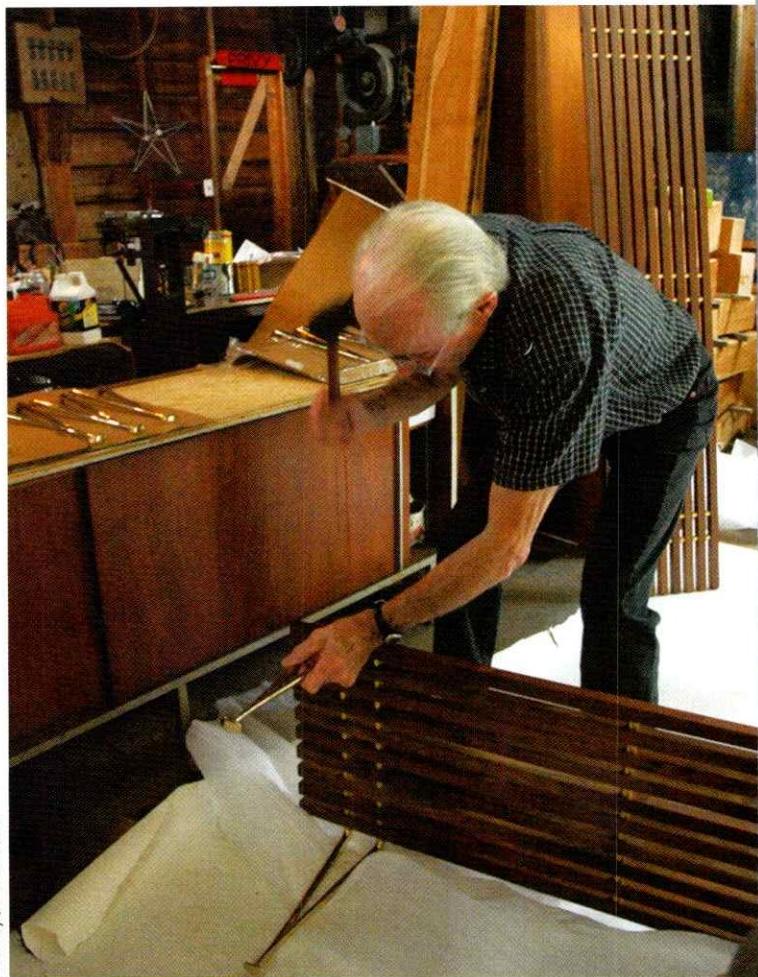


Photo by Jill Obermaier.

Above Acton demonstrates the ease with which the press-fit legs slide into the bench. The bench was shipped flat packed and assembled by the customer.

storage: the top flips to the vertical and the X-base legs cross over each other.

Architects and designers provided brisk business for Acton, specifying his minimalist designs for offices, banks, libraries, schools and churches. When they had trouble finding appropriate accessories, Acton began designing them himself: writing pads, pen holders, ash trays, smoke stands, most of chrome-plated metal. "We made almost anything anybody wanted," recalled Acton, "from baptismal fonts to bank checkout stands." His sales force, concerned that accessories wouldn't be taken seriously, convinced him to launch the line through a separate company: AMV (Acton Manufacturing Venture). "Some of the salesmen weren't sure about selling chrome-plated tin cans," said Acton. "But just about every airport you walked into had my smoking stands."

In 1968, Acton sold his companies to the Brunswick Corporation, staying on as an independent consultant. Brunswick merged Acton's lines with the newly acquired Burke furniture company, known for its knock-offs, in a bid to burnish Burke's image. And some former Brunswick executives enlisted Acton to design his "C-series" tables and chairs in hopes of reviving the moribund Domore Furniture Company.

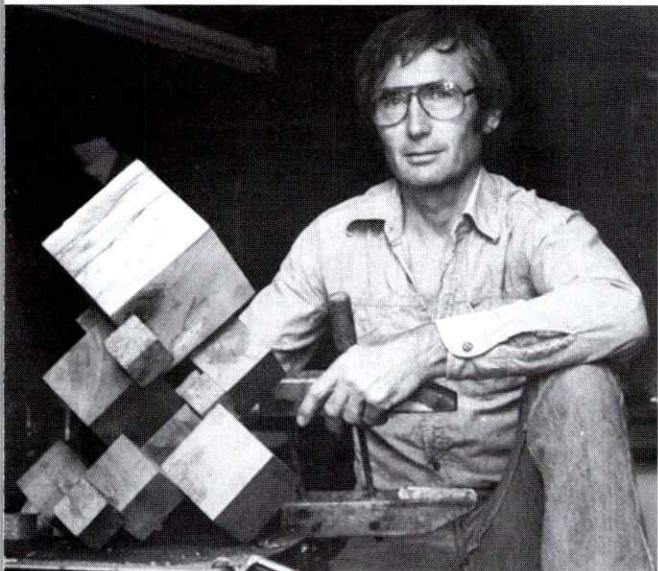


Photo courtesy Hugh Acton.

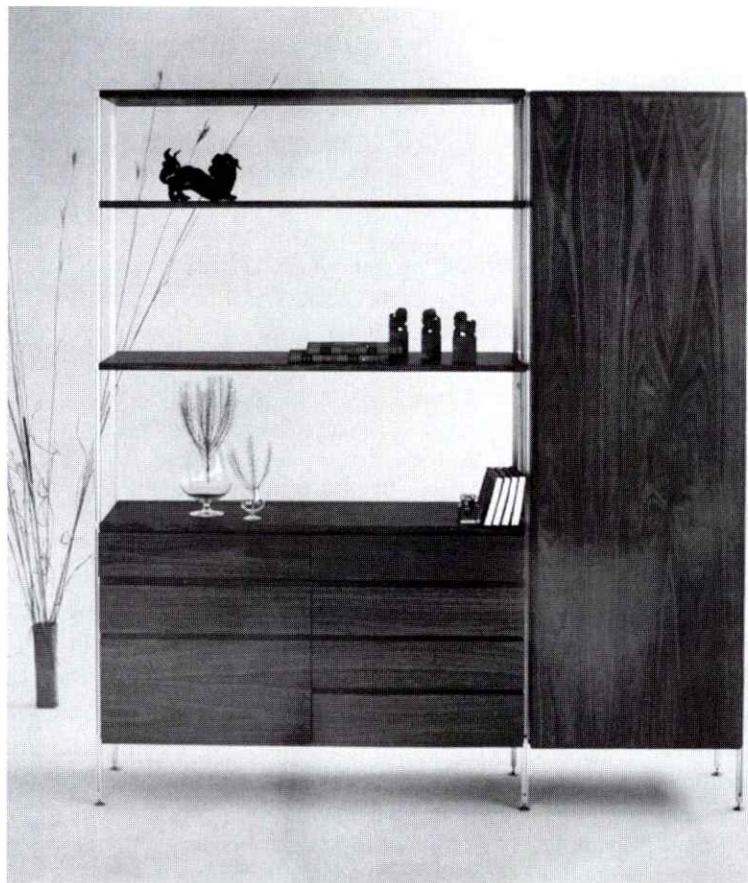


Photo courtesy Hugh Acton.



Photo courtesy Hugh Acton.

Top left Hugh Acton working in a sculpture studio near Pietrasanta, Italy, 1974.

Top right Acton's *Modular Storage System* (1957) won an American Institute of Design award.

Above The *Acton Stacker* (1975), a highly successful chair for the college market, is still in production.

In 1973, American Seating asked Acton to research the furniture needs of the burgeoning college market. "Colleges were upgrading to a more human level," Acton recalled. "They didn't want straight-backed chairs, they wanted chairs to think in." This dovetailed nicely with a design already forming on his drawing table; it became the *Acton Stacker*, introduced in 1975, with its distinctive Z profile that forms the arms and the legs with a single steel tube. A huge success, the chair is still in production.

Over two decades, starting in 1969, Acton transformed the family's 1940s Colonial-style farmhouse into a sprawling contemporary clad in brick, cedar and glass. His furniture plays a prominent role in every room, joining pieces by Charles and Ray Eames, Harry Bertoia and Warren Platner. Outside, set into the brickwork above the front door, is a hand-hammered copper panel, one of several Acton made for his home; his totem-like sculptures dot the hilly property. The sculptures occasionally appear at modernism shows, and, inspired by his daughter, Tana, a Santa Fe-based jewelry designer, he has also introduced lines of jewelry in crumpled copper, crumpled silver and silver wire.

Interestingly, Acton, the modernist, has always looked to the ideas of Aristotle, which he studied as an undergraduate, to guide his work. "There is a form that everyone can participate in," he explained. "There is such a thing as 'chairness.' I am constantly trying to eliminate the superfluous, but at the same time define the purpose of an object."

Dan Obermaier is a freelance writer. He and his wife, Jill, a photography teacher, have collected and studied midcentury modern design for more than 20 years.



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A SHULMAN FEAST

By Sandy McLendon

It's as if Jupiter aligned with Mars, as the cast of the musical *Hair* sang back in the days of Flower Power. Just in time for Modernism's tenth anniversary, three new books have been released that give readers the ultimate modernist eye candy: photographs by Julius Shulman – born in 1910 and still snapping the shutter. Every lover of modernist architecture has a "dream house," a coveted architectural masterpiece they know only from photographs. The pictures are usually Shulman's.

Julius Shulman, perhaps more than any other photographer, brings architecture alive. One of his main means of doing so breaks a long-standing rule of architectural photography: people should never be seen in the shot. By populating his photographs, Shulman has given readers of countless magazines and books the sense that modernism is warm and livable, less a "machine for living" than a reflection of life in a new age.

Though Brooklyn-born, Shulman has spent much of his 80-year career documenting the architecture of Southern California. His iconic photographs of houses by architects such as Richard Neutra, Pierre Koenig, Rudolph Schindler and Albert Frey can fairly be said to have "sold" modernism to Middle America; the irresistible images convey a sense of an unfettered, carefree, rational life.



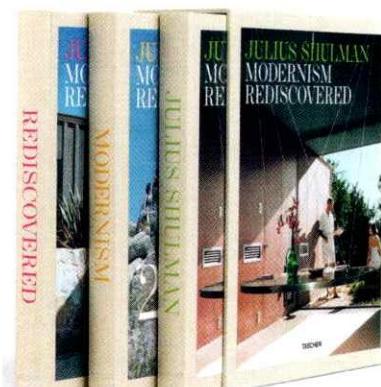
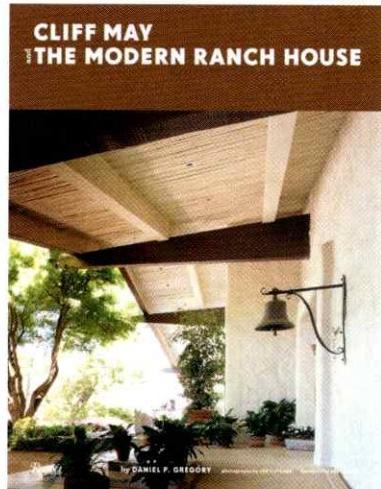
In *Julius Shulman: Palm Springs* (Rizzoli, hardcover, \$55, 208 pages, 244 illustrations in color and black-and-white), artist and curator Michael Stern and architecture critic Alan Hess document Shulman's work in a modernist paradise. Grouped by architect, the photographs show Palm Springs in its glamorous, celebrity-laden heyday.

A sweeping Paul R. Williams ranch house for Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz juxtaposes concrete block and stone with board-and-batten siding, and expanses of window wall look out on a golf course – a far cry from the couple's fictional East 68th Street walkup in *I Love Lucy*. Richard Neutra's famed Kaufmann House is revealed to be a structure designed to not impose itself on either the landscape or its owners. Palm Springs' modernism went far beyond the preferences of its homeowners: Shulman's camera also captured its modernist commercial and civic buildings, like its swooping, circle-themed Ocotillo Lodge, by Dan Palmer and William Krisel. An appreciative, informative text only adds to the fun of exploring this book, and it contains nuggets that will delight the reader: Who knew that Bob Hope's house was by John Lautner?

While many of the houses in *Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House* (Rizzoli, hardcover, \$60, 256 pages, 250 illustrations in color and black-and-white) are illustrated by recent photography by Joe Fletcher, Julius Shulman's period images give a first-day

impression of what self-taught designer Cliff May (1908-89) was all about: California modernism. Exceptionally light, bright and rambling, as well as extremely famous in their time, May's houses were often only one room deep; the outdoors was always mere steps away. Architect and *Sunset* magazine editor Daniel P. Gregory and photographer Fletcher bring May back to the attention of architectural mavens with a well-written, highly informative text and photographs of May's houses as they exist today. May's designs often updated Spanish Colonial's post-and-beam construction and stucco exteriors with enormous windows and pinwheeling floor plans, as in his third house for himself, now owned by actor Robert Wagner. May's exceptional ability to get magazine coverage is well-detailed here, with archival pages from *Sunset* showing how his house designs took America by storm.

Surely the finest book featuring Shulman's photography is *Julius Shulman: Modernism Rediscovered* (Taschen, hardcover, \$300, 1008 pages, approximately 900 illustrations in color and black-and-white, 11.4 by 14.5 inches). Taschen has raided Shulman's archives of more than a quarter of a million photographs to create three volumes of eye-popping splendor. Luxuriously bound, slipcased and printed on the extra-heavy paper it seems only Taschen will spend the money for, this *magnum opus* gives Shulman his full due. Four contributors (writer Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, photography critic Owen Edwards, history professor Philip J. Ethington and Los Angeles Modern Auctions director Peter Loughrey) lend their respective fields of expertise, helping the reader understand not only how much Shulman gave to modernism, but how he did it. Seemingly every important architect of the 20th century is represented in the dazzlingly reproduced photographs, from Corbu and Mies, to Bruce Goff, Craig Ellwood and Oscar Niemeyer. While this is an expensive set, it's a must-have for anyone who loves modernist architecture, even if they have to subsist on macaroni and cheese for a while to swing the purchase price.



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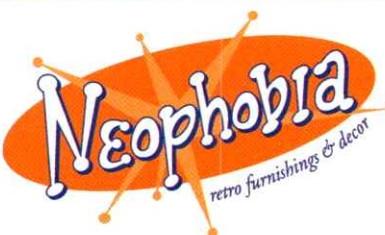
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Modernism in Miniature

By Kate Fogarty

Modernism has reported on the proliferation of modernist furniture for children, but the trend has taken a new twist – towards an even tinier market. What better accessory to complement Junior's pint-sized Eames- and Knoll-outfitted room than a streamlined dollhouse? A few forward-thinking furniture companies have introduced small-scaled designs, and even some traditional dollhouse companies now feature hipster homes in which Modernist Barbie would be thrilled to dwell. And with their often high price tags and irresistible architectural sophistication, it should come as no surprise that many adults are buying these "toys" for themselves, to either admire on a shelf or decorate impeccably, freed from real-life constraints.

Perhaps the most recent fervor for mini-modern began with the Kaleidoscope House in 2000. Introduced by Bozart Toys, which commissioned artists to design "museum quality" toys for children, the multilevel house had transparent sliding and interchangeable colored walls. Designed by artist Laurie Simmons and architect Peter Wheelwright, it featured a line of furniture by hot designers like Ron Arad and Karim Rashid, and paintings, photographs and sculpture by Peter



Halley, Cindy Sherman and other artists. The house caused an instant sensation and was even the subject of an exhibition at Deitch Projects gallery in New York. Unfortunately Bozart went bankrupt in 2001, before a pool pavilion extension, as well as a new crop of superstar-designed art and furniture, could be released. The Kaleidoscope House crops up on eBay occasionally; one still in the box sold last year for nearly \$1,600.

The Kaleidoscope House may have been slightly ahead of its time; a handful of new modernist dollhouses with impressive pedigrees are now flying off the shelves. If they're lucky, some well behaved children might be allowed to play with the Villa Sibi, a furnished birch and beech open-plan house with a pool house, deck and sliding Plexiglas and wood-slat walls. Designed by architect Wolfgang Sirch and sculptor Christoph Bitzer, the Villa Sibi is handcrafted in Bavaria by Sirch, a 300-year-old wood products company. It "sells out every Christmas," notes Clark Miller of Ameico, which retails the house for \$750 in the U.S.; he reports that only half of Villa Sibi purchases are for children.

Le Corbusier's 1926 Guiette House, in Antwerp, Belgium, is considered one of his greatest works. For the chance to own your own miniature (albeit loosely interpreted) version, \$295 seems like a bargain. Crafted of basswood by Roost, the Guiette Model can be painted, stained or displayed as is. Says Elizabeth Cashour, co-founder of the boutique Zipper Gifts in Los Angeles, "We have sold it to one or two people who are giving it to children, but also to collectors, and to people who just appreciate it as a 3-D model." A popular companion purchase, also by Roost, is Corb's Villa Savoye.

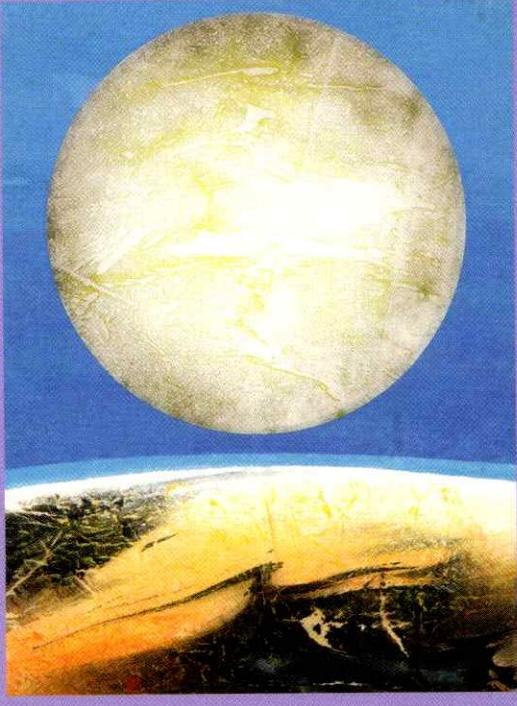
The world's leading supplier of dollhouses and miniatures, The Dolls House Emporium, of England, is best known for its Victorian townhouses, Tudor stone cottages and Neoclassical estates. But its Malibu Beach House is a modern delight. Depending on one's taste, the three-story, curvilinear manse can go groovy '70s (with the optional rooftop jacuzzi) or urban Art Deco (rooftop solarium). Fully built, painted, decorated and lit, it's not cheap at £1,700 (about \$3,360) – but it costs less than the real thing, attests Modern MC, the author of the blog Mini Modern (minimodern.blogspot.com) and a tireless collector and chronicler of the miniature modern world. Of her constant, expert refurbishment of her Kaleidoscope House, she reasons, "Having the house is like living out the things you would like to do in your own house. My family gets tired of me redecorating."

Last year, Modern MC won a heated bidding war on eBay for the 360 Dollhouse, a stunning one-off, rotating architect-designed model; the hammer price of \$950 generated some online carping; hence, her pseudonym. She hopes her blog will challenge the stereotype of miniature collectors as "old women with cats." The dollhouse business should start catering to a hipper crowd, she says. "When people find out I like this stuff, they're like, wow!" With the number of modernist dollhouses on the rise (and the real estate market in the tank), the miniature design market grows ever more attractive – to children and adults alike.



Top An interior of the Malibu Beach dollhouse, decorated in style by blogger Modern MC.

Above The wood and Plexiglas Villa Sibi dollhouse has a pool house and deck.



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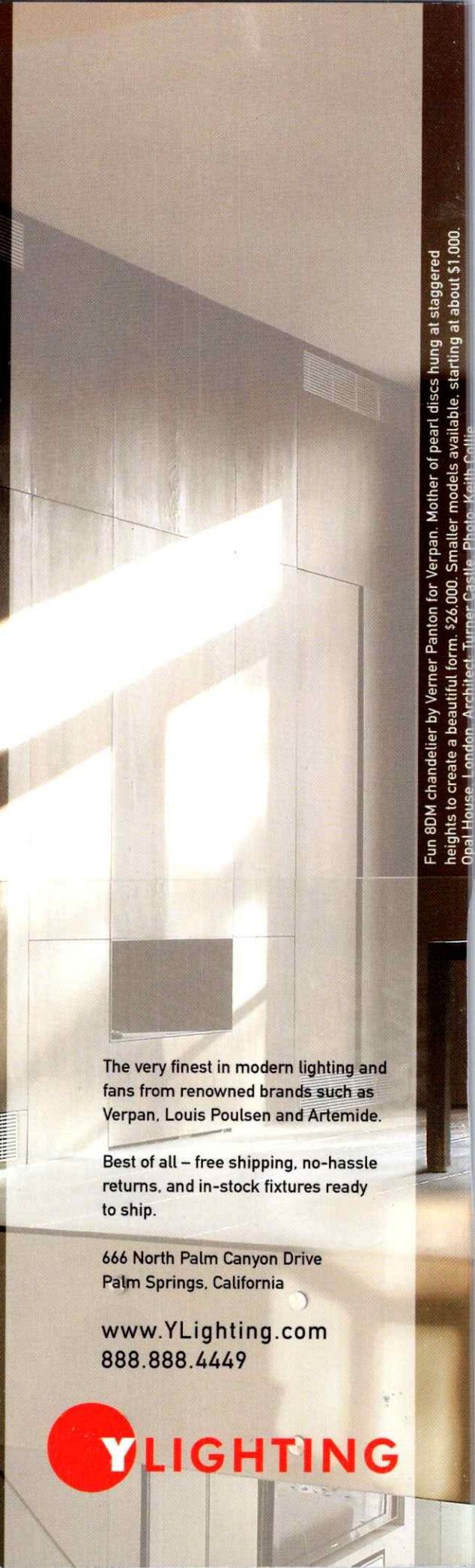


Clockwise from top left Helen Frankenthaler (b.1928); Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964); Liu Kuo-Sung, (b.1932); Andy Warhol (1928-1987); Jean Miotte, French (b. 1926); Harvey Ellis, (1852-1904 for Gustav Stickley, circa 1903-04).

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